

THE LENINIST



LONG LIVE MAY DAY!

**Join *The Leninist's* contingent —
10am Monday May 1, Highbury
Fields (nearest tube Highbury and
Islington)**



Fortnightly paper of the Leninists:
for a genuine Communist Party

DEMOCRACY is sweeping the Soviet Union or so says the western media. Capitalist style democracy maybe, for that is its only understanding of the word. If that is the case we have no intention of joining in the general jubilation. Yes under capitalism the people vote every five years, vote for who will misrepresent them. Because of the private ownership of the means of production democracy under capitalism is a sham. Democracy is a class question. Yes, we communists fight for the extension of democratic rights under capitalism, but we openly declare that this is in order to bring nearer its *revolutionary* destruction. This is ABC for all Marxists. But what of democracy under socialism?

It too is a form of the state, namely the dictatorship of the proletariat. But this class unlike all previous ruling classes has no interest in maintaining its state *permanently*. The working class must, if it is to fully liberate itself, go beyond socialism to communism, a society which will manage perfectly well without the state.

The transition from socialism to communism is not only based on taking production to levels which allow abundance but ever extending democracy so the state ceases to be a sphere for specialists (bureaucrats) and the working class goes from running the state indirectly to ruling it directly.

So what is going on in the Soviet Union? There is certainly a yearning for democracy. But democracy there is not.

Over the last decade we have seen the bureaucracy of the workers' state go from being a relative fetter on the development of the productive forces to being an absolute fetter. This places the question of political revolution firmly on the agenda. The only way *forward* is the turning of the bureaucracy from the master into the servant of society. This would not only mean bureaucrats like Gorbachev, Ligachev and Yeltsin getting the average workers' wage but as time goes by the withering away of this strata entirely.

Not surprisingly no section of the bureaucracy wishes to abolish itself (nor its privileges). One wing, the so-called 'conservatives', wants to do the impossible and stay still. This cannot be, and the Soviet population has through millions of 'negative' votes made clear its intense dislike of the old bureaucratic order.

It is the Gorbachev wing which has for the moment seized the initiative. To preserve itself it has used the slogan of democracy as a cover for its turn towards capitalism (perestroika). Whatever Gorbachev says the masses in the Soviet Union did not act as the master of society in March. Neither was there a vote for perestroika. There was no choice. Every single one of the carefully chosen candidates supported perestroika! Without the plurality of parties Gorbachev's talk of different platforms is nonsense.

What took place had more in common with a referendum than an election. True a referendum which overwhelmingly rejected the overtly privileged but nonetheless the Congress of the Peoples, like the proposed new arrangements in Poland and Hungary, will still be a sham democracy, just like the Tsarist duma, the House of Commons and the US Senate.

We are not seeing the flowering of proletarian democracy but desperate attempts by the deeply unpopular bureaucracy to legitimise itself. Inevitably though this and the turn to 'market socialism' has produced an unprecedented social ferment. Gorbachev openly says he fears the 'destabilisation of society' within the next two years.

He is right. Sooner rather than later the mighty Soviet working class will organise itself as a class for itself and write a new glorious chapter in world history worthy of those who made Russia the first land of socialism.

The Editor

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LETTERS

Mitchell

The IRSP would like to make some comments on interview with John Mitchell (*The Leninist* No76). We are obviously interested in what he has to say, particularly concerning the formation of a new party and his views on ourselves.

We note that Mitchell says "What they [IRSP] are saying seems to make sense". What in particular makes sense? If what he sees in the IRSP makes sense, why does he not actually discuss/work with us towards building the 'new party'?

In *An Camchéachta* No4 Mitchell said in an interview "that the promise shown in the political debates in the paper must stand the test of time before any final conclusion could be properly made". Standing on the sidelines is not a helpful process in political development. Nor is attempting to ride more than one horse at the same time. We are not in the business of providing entertainment! We not only want open debate but we see it as a necessity. For too long the "smoke filled room" has produced ideas without anyone outside that room having any inkling of how the ideas and decisions were reached.

Again we emphasise that open debate is necessary and we have already begun that process in our paper. It is not entertainment. The conception of *Iskra* as a focal point for debate, organisation and attracting membership on the basis of the politics displayed, is also the intention of *An Camchéachta*. There are many others like John Mitchell who sit on the sidelines and flirt with various trends in the belief that they can build an instant party. We believe that the party can only be built through rigorous ideological and political practice.

If Mitchell is serious then he should enter into the debate with those whose declared intention is to build a genuine Communist Party in Ireland.

PRO Irish Republican Socialist Party
Ireland

Nationalism

■ ■ ■

Support for Sinn Féin's 'national liberation' struggle in Northern Ireland seems to me to be inadmissible for communists.

Marx's analysis of the national question recognised that the formation of nation states was not a task of the proletariat. However, in the period of capitalist ascendancy, working class support for nationalist movements was sometimes justified, insofar as these aided the development of the world market and world proletariat.

In Ireland's case, Marx argued that the struggle for Irish independence would aid the progress of British workers to revolution by 1. weakening the landowners, the reactionary force in British politics, and 2. ending the influx of cheap Irish immigrant labour, which had hindered the development of class consciousness by causing conflict between English and Irish workers.

Today, when capitalism is decadent and socialism historically necessary, any social movement which is not a revolutionary prolet-

arian struggle against capitalism thereby locates itself on bourgeois terrain and is wholly reactionary.

The struggle led by Sinn Féin is objectively against foreign capital's domination of the Irish economy north and south, and for its replacement by nationalised capital - ie, state capitalism ('socialism in one country'). The fight against this 'solution' is a sine qua non of the development of class consciousness in the Irish proletariat. This is bound up with the need in Ireland of a genuine communist movement, part of the 'international communist party' which is a prerequisite for the world revolution.

Paul Burgess
East London

... Again

It is Alan Merrik who demonstrates "wilful ... blindness" in his reply to my letter (*The Leninist* No76). For he refuses to acknowledge the similarities between the military campaigns of EOKA in Cyprus and the IRA.

EOKA fought the forces of British imperialism. The IRA on occasion engages in sectarian attacks (as recently demonstrated in Coagh). The balance between support and insupportable military actions may vary in particular situations, but inevitably all nationalist movements have a tendency to express their patriotism in genocidal atrocities.

Militant nationalists also pose a potential threat to communists, as indicated by the actions of the Ipho, which began life assassinating former (Inla) comrades moving to Marxism.

Incidentally, does *The Leninist* support the demand for the union of Cyprus with Greece? For would this not represent 'self determination for the Greek people as a whole'?

A genuine communist party in Ireland would have no hope of winning support from Protestant workers if they refused to condemn the slaughter of people on the basis of their religious identity. Because we happen to reside in an imperialist state does not mean that we must write a blank cheque in favour of nationalist groups in oppressed nations. It is the internationalist duty of communists in Britain to help the cause of workers in other countries, particularly in Ireland. We do a disservice to these workers by apparently condoning anti-proletarian atrocities.

John Cable
Essex

Alan Merrik replies:

Our former comrade Burgess presents us with the most crass economism. He reduces the political question of a denial of rights to a simple question of economics: workers', in Ireland as in Britain, are exploited by capitalism. It's the same the world over. Therefore, we need nothing less than socialist revolution. On one level, of course, he is right - the root of the question is capitalism. But the form in which capital dominates Ireland is through Imperialism - a political question involving a fundamental denial of rights. Bourgeois right, as even the most casual reader of Marx will be aware, is a major force even under socialism, let alone capitalism. Yes, Marx supported Irish self determination because it would weaken the British bourgeoisie. But he also supported the struggle of the Fenians,

because it was a struggle for democratic rights.

To junk the real Marx, Burgess adds the word 'decadent'. This is dishonest. Capitalism has been decadent from around 1870-80, ie with the emergence of imperialism. This does not, though, invalidate Marx's support for the national liberation of Ireland, indeed it generalises it.

Lenin supported the Marxist method against the Burgesses of his day. "National oppression" he wrote "cannot be eliminated without an economic revolution. That is incontestable. But to limit ourselves to this is to lapse into absurd and wretched imperialist economism ... Marxists know that democracy does not abolish class oppression. It only makes the class struggle more direct, wider, more open and pronounced, and that is what we need ... The fuller national equality (and it is not complete without the freedom of secession), the clearer will the workers of the oppressed nations see that the cause of their oppression is capitalism, not lack of rights, etc." (CW, Vol 23, pp73 and 75).

Cable's brand of armchair Marxism takes us little further than Burgess'. EOKA, as well as IRA 'genocidal atrocities' and 'unsupportable attacks', are being used as a diversion from facing up to the duty of communists in Britain to unconditionally support - in practice - the liberation movement in its struggle against British imperialism.

On the unity of Greek Cypriots with Greece, or Turkish Cypriots with Turkey, or the unity of the island, or whatever, that is up to these peoples to decide. That is what self determination means.

In Motion

Supporters of *The Leninist* will be pleased to hear that the motions put forward for the UWC day of action on June 15 and the Hands off Ireland! work were easily carried at my workplace AGM at the Departments of Environment and Transport HQs in Westminster.

As you can imagine, the Hoi! motion caused the most controversy but was still carried by a majority of about 20 out of the 70 CPSA members present. The motion supporting the UWC was only opposed by a few.

One of the most vociferous opponents to both motions was a CPSA Broad Left '84 Euro CPGB member. This gentleman spoke about leaving the fight for the rights of the unemployed with the 'official' labour movement, rather than the UWC. He used the same argument when he spoke in favour of the 'Time To Go' campaign as a worthy cause to support over Ireland.

The CPSA members saw differently!
Steve Brandon
London

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

WRITE OR RING

If you would like to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist* please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Or phone us on 01-431 3135.

May Day 1989



Disciplined, organised and militant: bigger in '89

MAY DAY marches in Britain have traditionally been a measure of the strength not so much of the wider working class movement, but of the communists and the workers they organise and influence in their orbit. This year's march will be no different: it will be a physical manifestation of the relative strengths and combativeness of the different strands of the communist movement.

Thus it is ironically appropriate that the 'official communists' of the Communist Party of Britain and their South East Region TUC (Sertuc) allies are trying again this year to quietly strangle the May Day march rather than display their dismal numerical and political weakness on the streets. And at the same time it underlines the political confidence and superiority of the Leninists — both those from Britain and Turkey — as again we are the forces that are fighting to defend and build May Day as a celebration of militant working class power.

If (heaven forbid) all you ever read was the *Morning Star*, the trade union bureaucracy's notice board, you would simply not know that there actually was a May Day march this year. Just as they did last year, the CPB-influenced Sertuc is trying to ignore the demo and hope it goes away. For example, the large splash advert for Sertuc's May Day 'celebrations' (more like a wake, actually), totally fails to mention the London May Day march altogether! An oversight? A typesetting error, perhaps? We think not...

The growth of the strength of Leninism has been paralleled by the decline and disintegration of 'official communism'. Rather than face us on May Day and have the bubble of their claim to be the party conclusively popped, the centrists have scuttled away to organise their Euro-style 'festivals' and pray that the march dies a death.

This the Leninists will never allow to happen.

May Day — international workers' day — is always of more than symbolic importance for the working class movement. In a true sense May Day acts like a pointer to what is and what is to come.

The reason for this simple: those joining May Day demonstrations are those who recognise the need for workers of the world to unite across sectional and national div-

isions. Because of this, as well as mirroring day-to-day changes in the political climate, May Day also gauges the strength of the politically organised working class — the vanguard.

We defend and build May Day precisely because we are the organisation that is fighting for revolution in Britain: the epigones of 'official communism' have abandoned the May Day demonstration just as they have abandoned even their formal adherence to revolution.

On last year's march, *The Leninist* organised the largest British contingent, with some 60 comrades behind our banners. This year, we plan to at least double this number. This is indeed an ambitious target. Setting aims on paper is all very well, but can we actually achieve it?

Comrades, there is no doubt that we can build this contingent! Like all political groups, *The Leninist* has a 'turnover'. Some of the comrades who marched with us last year have fallen away for one reason or another. But then the range and quality of the contacts we have built in the last twelve months have improved considerably. Through campaigns like the Unemployed Workers Charter and Hands off Ireland! *The Leninist* has started to provide coherent foci for those forces looking for a real fightback.

Thus, we call on all those who support *The Leninist*, and those comrades who support the work of our organisation, to march with us on May Day this year and help build a fighting communist alternative!

That does not happen spontaneously. Quite the reverse. Given the fact that we live in a bourgeois society, communists must constantly battle to inculcate a communist approach to work and to combat the narrow individualistic tendencies that capitalism produces in even the most dedicated of revolutionaries. Communists are made and, crucially, remade: they are never simply born.

Our celebration of May Day does not just stop at joining the march in London therefore. We are using the opportunity of having comrades from all over the country, both seasoned supporters and new comrades, in London to hold an education school over the weekend April 29/30 before Monday's demo, to help arm comrades with the politics to understand and change the world: to help make

and remake communists.

The school goes under the title of 'Facing up to the Future: reform or revolution?' and will aim, through examining the central ideas of what is probably the most coherent expression of reformism apart from the BRS itself, establish what Leninism sees as the key issues in today's society and how we relate to them as revolutionaries.

Also over the weekend before May Day, there are two rallies to establish a momentum for the march on Monday. The first, on Saturday night, is organised by our comrades on the Communist Party of Turkey and the second, on the eve of the demonstration, is staged by *The Leninist* on the night of Sunday April 30 (see below for details of both).

Culture in the 'narrower' sense is also very much in evidence in this Leninist programme of events. Apart from the entertainments that will form an integral part of the CPT's rally, we are proud that our rally will feature the first performance by the Workers' Theatre Movement of *The First of May* (1989) an update of a street theatre piece from 1932. The sketch will also be performed at the beginning and end of the May Day march.

The ambitious plans of the Leninists for May Day contrast starkly with the deadly dull bureaucrats' jamboree that the Sertuc/CPB pot bellies are staging in the Barbican Centre (we kid you not — the *Barbican Centre*). The official opening of this farce is at 1pm by ... wait for it ... Big Norman Willis (try not to get too excited). Then, later we are threatened (sorry 'promised'), "major labour movement figures". Rumours abound that Rodney Bickerstaffe is lined up to unleash his rhetoric to fire the assembled punters.

It is despicable that Sertuc is actually wasting £25,000 on this nonsense, while at the same time starving the march of publicity and resources. But these forces will not win: the May Day march will happen this year! Leninists will defend and build May Day and one day sweep aside all those who are trying to burying it and all the militant traditions of our class!

•Leninist education school, 'Facing up to the Future: reform or revolution', April 29/30. Phone or write for details.

•Communist Party of Turkey May Day rally. Saturday, April 29. Stoke Newington Town Hall — 6pm. Main speaker, R Yurukoglu. From 8pm onwards, food and entertainment.

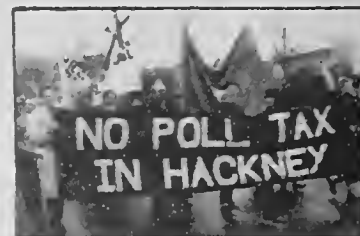
•Leninist May Day rally — Sunday, April 30. University College London Union, 25 Gordon Street, London WC1 OAH (nearest tubes, Euston Square and Euston) — 7.30pm. Speakers from *The Leninist*, Communist Party of Turkey, Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran (Rah e Kargar), UWC, and John Mitchell, ex general secretary of the Irish Distributive and Administrative Trade Union. Includes performance by Workers Theatre Movement.

•London May Day march. Rally under the banners of *The Leninist*, 10am Highbury Fields (Highbury and Islington tube), Monday May 1.

Ian Mahoney

The Easter conference of the National Union of Teachers was split down the middle. On the one hand an attempt by the executive — along with its Euro president June Fisher — to weaken a motion calling for flat rate increase of £2,500 backed by strike action, was defeated narrowly on a card vote. On the other moves to get an emergency debate over the six NUT members from Highbury Quadrant Primary School who were victimised by the Labour controlled Ilea for their trade union and anti-racist work just failed. Nevertheless the conference showed just how weak the executive's hold is. The NUT is not primarily divided along left reformist, right reformist lines, more radical left, left/right reformist lines. Revealingly 'official communist' groups like the NCP and CPB lined up with the left/right reformist 'new realist' executive line, in fact the Euros have a more 'left' position than them on most issues. The Broad Left which controls the executive is rapidly losing ground to the Socialist Teachers Alliance, lead by a variety of Trotskyists who lack any sort of a coherent platform. With the likelihood of an imposed pay settlement this year of 6%, just below inflation, the rumblings of the class rooms will increase. A communist strategy is needed to give this revolutionary direction — something that the STA can do no more do than the Broad Left.

The mass protests against the poll tax in Scotland have shown the potential for resistance to this attack on the whole working class. But what it shows is the need for correct leadership. The campaign in Scotland focused on non registration. That has now failed, and so it has now moved one rung down the ladder to non-payment. This is no more than an apology for a strategy. Instead of having a fighting platform the campaign merely puts the onus onto individuals who can be picked off one by one. This is certainly what will happen. The result of the failure of the official poll tax campaigns has been the growth of nationalism -blame the English. But in England and Wales the anti-poll tax campaign is following in the footsteps of Scotland, a 'bishops to brickies' campaign unable and unwilling to approach resistance on a class basis that doesn't look to the church, councillors, the SNP or Labour Party. We say that workers must look to their own strength as a class, form the sort of fighting bodies that past struggles have thrown up, such as the Miners Support Committees. Such councils of action must build for Britain-wide collective class action against the tax. That, not individualistic responses and big names, is the way to win.



•The anti-poll tax campaign in England and Wales is marching in the footsteps of Scotland. Unless another road is taken defeat is certain

The government has announced legislation to abolish the Dock Labour Scheme — which guarantees registered dockers the right to work. After staging numerous provocations and stepping up the propaganda war the Tories feel strong enough to take on the dockers who are rightly agitating for a national strike. Under the Tories' anti-trade union laws, solidarity action by other workers is now illegal. The Tories reckon that in spite of all the talk the Labourite lead T&G will have no will to fight and they can score another victory over the 'enemy within'. We say dockers must fight back on their own terms. To fight back effectively the law must be broken, defence must give way to offence — spread the scheme to all ports, break from the collaborative Dock Labour Board, organise on the basis of drawing in all dockers in the form of a national strike and win -starting with T&G workers — other sections of workers to take solidarity strike action. That is the only way to win.

Surplus



The Euro paper, *7 Days*, has over the last few months been running a campaign to cajole the government in the German Democratic Republic to place bulk orders. After much hueing and crying the Euros have got what they wanted. Of course, this has nothing to do with furthering the cause of socialism, everything to do with political prostitution, but then that's the only way the Euro paper will survive. *The Leninist* has a very different approach. We rely on our politics convincing our readers. That is the communist way ... and it works. In March our £600 monthly fighting fund stood in surplus by the tune of £21. It must be said though this was in no small measure due to a handful of readers who each sent in donations of £100 or more. This cannot be relied on for May. We not only need the occasional large donation we also need the steady, reliable collections from groups of sympathisers.

Fighting ET: Strengths and Weaknesses



One lobby: worth 1,000 TUC resolutions

OVER 40 delegates and activists, representing a broad geographic and political spread, attended the Action Against Workfare organising conference on March 18 in Manchester. The delegates gathered to both review the strengths and weaknesses of the campaign against ET so far, and also to lay down more detailed plans for the June 15 national protest against this cheap labour scheme.

The organising body for this conference was the National Coordinating Group, which includes both the UWC and the TGWU Shop Stewards Combine, established by a conference against workfare last year. The meeting was a successful one; nevertheless it showed us the problematic areas, both political and organisational, that continue to bedevil the development of a mass movement against attacks on the unemployed.

The Unemployed Workers Charter has hammered home time and time again the fact that the real significance of government's Employment Training has been *political* rather than technical. From any other criteria, this 'training' scheme has been an unmitigated flop for the Tories.

For example, unemployed people on ET have 'trainee' status and are thus removed from the unemployment count, despite the fact that they continue to be paid by fortnightly giro from the Unemployment Benefit Service. The majority of ETers do not go on to full time employment when their courses end and are simply registered as short term (newly) unemployed. The supposed 'buoyancy' in the employment market and the turnover of people actually finding work is thus greatly exaggerated with a system like this.

However, there is a problem for this Tory attempt to fiddle the figures, a detail they overlooked in their calculations. Put quite simply, it is this: unemployed people are not *stupid*. There has been a much lower than expected take up

rate for the new scheme. Whilst the net number of 'trainees' on ET has grown by 20,000 per month, almost exactly the same number have exited residual Community Programme schemes – and the combined ET and CP figures have not exceeded 170,000 since September.

The Department of Employment is thus considering a 10% cutback in the annual 600,000 authorised places on ET. But it is important to realise that even the 'disappointing' ET total for the government is an inflated one.

Reports are coming in from all over the country of 'stacking' trainees – that is, starting the 'trainee' on the benefit-plus £10 allowance, but only beginning their actual 'training' at a later date. In November, Training Managers (the people responsible for the training and practical experience outlined for each ETer) in Birmingham and Solihull were warned that the Training Agency (the government department running the whole shebang) had "disquieting information" that some Training Managers are "sending trainees home until a placement with an employer can be found" and "being asked to come back at a later date" even though the ET3b form – which triggers the ET trainee status and allowance – had already been passed on to the Unemployment Benefit Office!

Also, the UWC has been told of 'trainees' who have dropped out after a few weeks of their courses, but continued getting the £10 top-up allowance – ie they have still be excluded from the government's unemployed figures.

The fact that a major concern of the Tories has been to massage the unemployed figures has been underlined by a confidential internal Training Agency memorandum to its employees (and leaked by UWC sympathisers) setting two ET priorities for the coming period: First, 'volume' and second 'quality'. However, given that the unemployed have had sufficient sense to stay away from ET

in droves the government's figure juggling plans have been badly mauled.

The quality of the 'training' offered to ETers has become something of a joke, not simply amongst the 'trainees' themselves, but even amongst the bosses who are using the scheme. A slip in the January issue of *Employment Training News*, the Training Agency propaganda rag, inadvertently passed eloquent comment on the scandalously low training levels on offer on ET. Beneath a picture of an intent young person fiddling around on a key board a caption read: "Learning *type-writing skills*" (sic)! Enough said!

Employment Training has been most attractive to small employers with a low level skill and training requirements. The rest have seen little benefit in the scheme.

Even the Tory controlled council covering Thatcher's constituency in the London borough of Barnet abandoned the scheme. Significantly, the report they produced justifying their decision verifies the points the UWC has made about the passive boycott of the scheme by the unemployed; the other critical problem that laid the scheme low in the borough was the refusal of the Construction Industry Training Board to sponsor training on the scheme.

The farcical examples of what passes for 'training' on this slapdash cheap labour con job are legion and participants in the 'Action for Workfare' conference in Manchester heard numerous horror stories. The reports from various parts of the country emphasised what the UWC has found in the course of its work: that *technically* ET is a flop. *Politically* however, it has been a runaway success.

The Tories have succeeded in establishing the principle of *work for dole* not simply amongst wide swathes of 'public opinion', but also, crucially, with the TUC and the leadership of the Labour Party. So despite the fact that the scheme has started to come apart in some

parts of the country, it remains a tremendous danger to the unemployed, both employed and unemployed.

In fact, some sections of the Labour Party are *ahead* of the Tories in advocating compulsory cheap labour schemes. Frank Field, the bumptious and offensively anti-working class MP for Birkenhead and trustee of the ginger group Full Employment UK, has put his name to this organisation's call for compulsory slave labour for the unemployed. (The UWC's original offer of a debate with Mr Field still stands, despite his contemptuous and cowardly reply to our first challenge – see the next issue of *Unemployed Organiser* for a full report).

Field's dirty scabbing on the unemployed along with the TUC's collaboration with ET illustrates just how far the rot has gone in the workers' movement. As the 'Action Against Workfare' conference agreed, waiting for fightback to be led by forces like these is worse than useless: the battle against ET and all cheap labour schemes must be taken into the hands of the rank and file of the workers' movement and unemployed themselves. Comrades, its down to us ...

So exactly how do we fight back? The Manchester conference on March 18 posed a number of questions to the majority of the participants, answers to which the UWC has found.

First, the reports of work from different parts of the country illustrated again the futility of relying on the official structures and leaderships of the trade unions to initiate a fightback. Some of the organisations represented at the conference have stated on previous occasions, in opposition to the UWC's calls of action, that 'a resolution passed by the TUC is worth a 1,000 lobbies'!

The fate of even the fudged position of the TUC adopted in September of last year warns of the disastrous consequences of such a bureaucratic approach. In the first general council after the congress, the stance was summarily overturned to bring the TUC into line with the traitorous leadership of the Labour Party.

Organisations and individuals who hold to such a view and at the same time cooperate with organisations like the UWC in the fight against ET are in an extremely contradictory and untenable position in the long run. This fact is proved by two extremely significant attacks on the two principal organisations that have collaborated in the fight against ET and in building the Manchester conference itself: the Unemployed Workers Charter and the National T&G Community Programme Shop Stewards Combine.

Leading members of the Combine are currently facing disciplinary action against them, instigated by the union's rightwing in collaboration with soft left elements, for their principled fight against slave labour schemes.

Also, it is extremely significant that the National Unemployed

Centres Combine, an amalgam of left bureaucrats who staff the dwindling number of official labour movement 'tea and sympathy' centres for the unemployed and the force behind the National Unemployed Charter (see *Unemployed Organiser* No4), actually decided to *boycott* the Manchester conference because of the participation of the UWC!

This coupled with the attempts to block the T&G membership of Mark Fischer, UWC National Organiser, illustrate the attitude of bureaucratically orientated elements to those political forces that are determined to campaign for the rights of the unemployed single-minded, irrespective of the damage it may do the electoral prospects of Her Majesty's Labour Party or the carefully fostered 'respectable' image of Norman Willis.

These attacks underline the burning need to build a mass, fighting movement of the unemployed. Such a movement could overcome the sectionalist approach that not only characterises the right wing of the movement, but also hampers the left.

For example, the T&G Community Programme Combine have a dilemma. Their representatives pointed out to the conference, as they are successful and close down ET schemes and as the Community Programme ends and the 'trainees' dispersed, they find their membership decimated. Phil Griffin for the Combine reported that over the last year or so their membership has plummeted from around 25,000 to under 500.

As the Combine's base has dried up, unsurprisingly the right wing in the union has stepped up the attacks. Clearly, activists need an organisation that can organise across union divides; can organise trainees on any scheme in any workplace; can unite employed with unemployed; can pull in supporters in the T&G, Nalco, NUM, Nupe or any union; and an organisation which can fight for the interests of the unemployed without being hamstrung or diverted by the attacks of the rule book wielding right wing. That organisation is the UWC.

In our report to the Manchester conference, the UWC illustrated the breadth and impact of our work, both in the unions and on the streets. We are determined to build on our impressive record as we are only too well aware that we are just scratching the surface of what needs to be done.

The Manchester 'Action Against Workfare' conference was an important milestone in the development of a united working class crusade against all the bosses' cheap labour schemes. As reported to the meeting, there are currently over 160 unemployed organisations up and down the country; but we would argue there is only one which can really build the mass movement our class needs.

- Build the UWC!
- All out on June 15!

Mark Fischer

Cry Sellout



The masses say revolution not reform

What is happening in South Africa? According to the Gorbachevites the contending sides of revolution and counterrevolution should seek an accommodation

AT A TIME when the South African government is embroiled in a bitter leadership struggle and beset, within the Afrikaner camp, by liberals on one side and ultra-conservatives and open fascists on the other, it seems that with the encouragement of the Gorbachevite leadership in the Soviet Union they are offering an olive branch to the ANC.

Leading figures in the apartheid regime, in total contrast to past stock references to the ANC as "terrorist" and "communist", speak of it as a "nationalist movement" and laud its performance in World War II, when it supported the war effort. Crisis ridden though it is, the regime has managed to seize the initiative.

With the mass struggle in South Africa at a low point, the focus has shifted to the diplomatic plane. Last year's US-Soviet sponsored deal on Southern Africa deprived the Angolans of Cuban aid and the ANC and Umkhonto we Sizwe, its armed wing, of Angolan bases. Now the ANC is itself subject to the attentions of Gorbachevism. Through its military and financial backing the Soviet Union has a powerful lever with which to shift the anti-apartheid forces and to tempt the forces of apartheid.

ANC spokesmen, such as Chris Hani, have denied they are under any pressure from the Soviet Union. But there can be no denying the apartheid-Soviet 'thaw'.

One indication of this has been South Africa's lifting of the law against trading with the socialist countries. Should the fancy take them, South Africans can now pick up Lada cars or Sekonda watches. Presumably this cuts both ways. One can only wonder at the attitude of those 'official communists' in Britain who provide the backbone of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in so many areas. Given their fetishism of the consumer boycott campaign, parking themselves outside Sainsbury's and Shell every Saturday morning, what will they make of all this?

There can though be no denying the general political direction in which the Gorbachevites are trying to push the revolutionary movement. Yuri Yukalov, head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Southern Africa Department, is quoted as saying: "We would prefer a political settlement and want apartheid to be dealt with by political means. Any solution through military means will be short lived. We do not want to emphasise the need to enlarge the armed struggle. South Africa should not be destroyed." For "political settlement" read 'reformism'; for "military means" read 'revolution'.

In accordance with this, Anatoly Gromyko, son of Andrei and head of Moscow's Africa Institute, said: "There would have to be a programme of reforms submitted to nationwide discussion at which all sections of society would be represented ... This will mean sitting down for negotiations for two, three or however many years to solve the problems." (both quotes from the *Independent*, March 16 1989).

Such Gorbachevite sentiments have, whatever Hani says, been echoed in the leading circles of the ANC. A unnamed senior representative was cited in the *Independent* of September 24 last year: "We don't believe that victory will be achieved by armed mass insurrection any more. The most important thing is to create the right political situation. There may be a need for using weapons at some stage, but only as part of a political struggle."

A tendency towards unprincipled compromises is present in all bourgeois democratic movements. Some ANC leaders have always argued for the armed struggle as a bargaining chip by which to force the apartheid regime to the negotiating table; that is, not as a means to make revolution. The pressure of the Soviet Union has obviously added weight to this.

How well was this opportunism ridiculed by Comrade Mzala, writing in the South African Communist Party's *African Communist* in 1985: "The opportunistic liberal democrats, who are the political representatives of the compromising section of the middle strata, do not demand the overthrow of the racist government ... There will be nothing even smelling of people's

government in Southern Africa if all we imagine is some white-shirted and neck-tied parliamentary affair of revolutionary phrases about democracy and freedom, adopting all kinds of 'bills' and 'acts', while we have not built up a force of victorious armed people, a force that will be a direct consequence of armed insurrection." (On the third hold of revolution, *African Communist*, third quarter 1985).

We hope that Comrade Mzala and other militants of the SACP and the ANC are organising against the rightward lurch of the world communist movement under Gorbachev's tutelage and still hold to this revolutionary position. The abandonment of such revolutionary perspectives in South Africa will spell disaster for the struggle of the masses for even the most basic rights, let alone for full liberation. The Gorbachevites are trying to cook up a reformist deal but this 'hot spot' screams out for a revolutionary solution.

The revolutionary masses have not fought long and hard, suffered mass arrests, torture, death and the day to day horrors of apartheid, to have their revolution negotiated away. Their heroism must not be sold away for piecemeal reforms, hidden under the shroud of 'political settlement'. In the mass demonstrations of the mid eighties they demanded AK47s, SAM 7s and other Soviet weapons for their revolution. Gorbachev's diplomatic foreign legion will not succeed in fobbing them off with sugary phrases. They will go on to make their revolution, of that we are sure.

Revolutions are not pieces of real estate, they are not for sale, in Nicaragua, Afghanistan or Southern Africa.

Alan Merrik

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The efficiency of the British left is frightening. Take, for instance, the small march organised by the Irish in Britain Representation Group in London on March 18. The WRP (Workers Press) contingent (all two of them) turned up after the march moved off and could be seen sprinting (as best they could), banner unfurled between them, after the rapidly receding demonstration (wait for us, we're the 'vanguard'). The East London Troops Out Movement — who at least made it on time — actually managed to lose their banner poles, and thus were compelled to shamble along bannerless. What shining examples of 'discipline, organisation and militancy'.

A recent interesting exchange took place between a Leninist comrade and a leading member of Workers Power, a certain Keith Hassle. Keith stated that they hadn't supported Hands off Ireland! when it was set up because The Leninist had, quote, "fucked up" And they couldn't support it now because Ho! had released literature with material that they couldn't agree with. When asked what this might be, Keith answered that it wasn't exactly what was in the lit, but what wasn't, i.e. nothing on the Labour Party (yawn). This somehow meant that it could not be used in there. When asked why this should be so, Keith was unable to answer. If the poor confused man has had time to mull this one over perhaps he or one of his comrades would like to put pen to paper and explain it to us.

Putter patter, splash, part 99. The biggest rat of the lot on the leaky Euro CPGB vessel — not long before it reaches the bottom — has just jumped ship. General Secretary Gordon McLennan has announced his retirement, after presiding over two major splits, a reduction in membership of more than 20,000 to (on paper) around 8,000 and the all but nominal demise of what he still calls the CPGB. Will the last person to leave the Euro 'party' please turn off the lights.

It transpires that Stalin had a show trial prepared for CPGB General Secretary Harry Pollitt. One can only wonder what centrists like the NCP and the Straight Leftists make of this, great admirers of both these men. Particularly, what will Straight Left's head writer, 'Harry Steel' (think about it) do? Develop chronic schizophrenia?

UNDoubtedly the miners' strike of 1984-5 was a Great Strike. It lasted a full 12 months, there were 10,000 arrests, the bourgeois state entered the fray with what amounted to a nationally organised police force fully equipped with all the paraphernalia of Northern Ireland and was prepared to spend at least three billion pounds in order to beat the miners. The strike was of central importance, not just for the miners, but for all classes and all strata in British society, not least revolutionaries. All ideologies, trends and shades in the working class movement were therefore put to the test; it was a test of programme (in the broadest sense of the word).

Our comrade Lenin had no hesitation in calling the Councils of Action, which emerged in Britain during the stormy events of 1920, embryonic soviets. Likewise we have no hesitation. In the miners' Great Strike we too saw embryonic organs of working class state power. In the formation of hit squads we saw the embryonic form of workers' militias. In the Women Against Pit Closures movement we saw an embryonic mass working class women's movement. As to embryonic soviets, they could be found in the Miners' Support Committees which sprung up in just about every city and town in the country.

We did our utmost to encourage what was embryonic to go to full development. We argued for generalised strike action organised locally by transformed Miners' Support Committees made up of elected and recallable delegates. We also called for the hit squads to be expanded into the Workers' Defence Corps we saw in 1926. All this was necessary if victory was to be secured. To have argued for anything else was to argue for defeat.

Nevertheless, even though it was at the end of the day defeated, the miners' strike was a *Great Strike*. It marked a watershed in the development towards a British revolution. It marked the eclipse of the politics of class consensus. With it the days of beer and sandwiches at No 10 were finally over, the riot shields and molotov cocktails of the Great Strike heralded the emergence of the politics of class war.

Past lessons

To understand the importance of the miners' Great Strike it is essential to put it into its historic context and to draw upon the lessons of the past. Having done this we will then turn to the politics of the strike, see how the various trends within the workers' movement fared when tested and ask what the strike tells us about the period we are now living in.

The historic importance of the Great Strike can be fully appreciated by comparing it to the period leading up to the General Strike, ie the wave of militancy that characterised British politics from 1910 to 1914 and then from the end of World War I till 1926.

Before World War I Germany and the United States were steadily eroding Britain's domination of the world market. This reached a point where Britain's capitalists were forced to turn in on their own working class and attack its living standards in order to face up to their rivals.

Consequently the number of strikes spiralled upwards. There were only 399 in 1908. This rose dramatically in 1911 to 903 and in the latter half of 1913 and the first half of 1914 strikes were occurring at a rate of something like 150 per month. As we all know, with the active assistance of the Labour Party social peace was imposed on the working class in August 1914 so as to allow British imperialism to begin its slaughter of Germans. But, as the war dragged on, mass discontent built up.

The February 1917 revolution in Russia acted as a catalyst. The dam burst. A series of huge strikes shook the country. Militancy reasserted itself and revolutionaries suddenly found they had mass influence. Inspired by Russia the famous Leeds convention came together in June - representing shop stewards committees, workers' committees, socialist groups as well as Labourites - and declared for establishing a nation wide network of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. With the cessation of hostilities the class struggle reached yet new heights of which 1920 and 1926 were the twin pinnacles.

After it was compelled in 1920, by the Hands off Russia campaign and the threat of a general strike, to back down and stop arming Poland in its war against Soviet Russia, the ruling class was determined to reassert its authority. It finally succeeded in 1926. The defeat of the nine day General Strike was not

This article is based on a speech made by Jack Conrad at a meeting in the month called to commemorate the fifth anniversary of

Five years

only a defeat for the miners, who were forced back to work by the employers after a bitter 7 month lockout, but for the entire working class.

Of course, if the boss class had been forced by continued international pressure to maintain their offensive in the head-on way that had characterised the previous fifteen years, then the British working class would have, whatever its conservative traditions, taken up the cudgels of class war again. This could have meant the emergence of a revolutionary situation.

But it was not to be. Empire preference allowed Britain to prop up its world position. Capital was restructured but the brunt of this was borne by the growing - though isolated - army of unemployed. The working class was effectively split. Every year from 1926 till the outbreak of World War II those in employment saw their living standards rise. And even the miners, who suffered a pay reduction in 1926-27, enjoyed rising real wages from 1928 to 1939.

This statistic gives us a key to understanding why 1926 was such a turning point. It was more than a political defeat, it was the end of a period of militancy. Having reasserted its authority the ruling class could, through drawing on its investments abroad and exploiting the empire, afford to buy social peace.

This marginalised the politics of militant class struggle. Our Communist Party, which was recruiting not quite hand over fist during 1925-6 - nonetheless growing from 2,000 to 5,000 - found that its mass base was punctured. For example, its National Minority Movement went from having a million members affiliated to it in 1926, to being an empty shell three years later when it was finally closed down.

Membership changed in character. In 1926 the CPGB was based on the core of the working class - miners, engineering workers, transport workers. After 1926 most of these militants were sacked and blacklisted. Soon half its membership consisted of housewives and the unemployed.

Britain today

Not surprisingly, during the long boom of the 1950s and 60s Britain's relative decline had very little direct effect on political life internally. Indeed, Britain experienced remarkable stability. Butskellism ruled. But in the late 1960s the long boom ran out of steam and gave way to stagnation and a *pre-general crisis situation*.

Consensus politics were gradually eroded. The capitalist state tried to reduce the bargaining power of the working class. Barbara Castle's 'In Place of Strife' was followed by Heath's Industrial Relations Act. Neither had the intention of smashing working class organisation, more to tip the balance of class forces in favour of the bourgeoisie so as to allow it to up the rate of exploitation.

Where Castle and Heath failed, the Labour Party's Social Contract (at least in its earlier stages) succeeded. Because of the connivance and agreement of the trade union bureaucracy, workers' living standards were pushed down. This could not be sustained. Trade union leaders cannot for long get away with deliberately selling their members' labour power below its value. Hence they were by and large forced to go along with the explosion of rank and file anger in late 1978. During the Winter of Discontent workers managed to claw back some of what was taken away but in the process left Callaghan's government and its Social Contract totally discredited.

The Thatcher government represented a quantitative development from those of Wilson, Heath and Wilson/Callaghan. Her government shunned the politics of class collaborationism for the politics of confronta-



1984-85: the shape of things to come

tion. No attempt has been made to police the working class by further integrating the unions into the state. The opposite happened. Union tops were kicked out of the corridors of power and the legal rights of trade unions were restricted. But this was not enough.

The working class scored some notable victories in the early 1970s. And while after 1979 the Tories had skilfully picked off one section after the other the mighty NUM remained. Time and time again Thatcher sought compromise rather than risk taking it on. In the mean time she prepared.

To put a stop to Britain's relative decline the bourgeoisie had to confront the miners. They not only kept up the price of coal - the most important source of power, even with nuclear power, hydro-electricity and falling oil prices - but were seen as a sort of praetorian guard by the militant section of the working class. The strength of the miners gave other sections confidence. It is against this background that the miners' Great Strike took place.

After it was over Ron Todd said it was a strike "the likes of which we will never see for a hundred years". He was trying to make it into a folk myth, a 'mantlepiece' strike to tell one's children about. We take a completely opposite view.

The capitalist class will sooner or later be forced to turn in on its own working class with renewed ferocity, in order to survive. The present economic 'upturn' is already fading. We say while 1926 was the end of a period of militancy, 1984-85 was the beginning of a new period of militancy which will see strikes more bitter, more fierce, more dangerous to both sides.

A new general crisis is looming. Paper money, banking, credit, interest and fictitious capital in general are now a main source of Britain's wealth. This makes it particularly vulnerable to any sort of crisis (the world's money markets are now linked by a network of computers; like a house of cards, if one goes, the lot *instantly* goes). After 1926 the ruling class did not do a Germany. Britain still possessed a massive empire alongside which stood dependent empires such as the Dutch and the Portuguese with which to cushion itself against the effects of the last general crisis.

This is no longer the case. Of course, Bri-

tain is still a major imperialist power but it is now one of the weaker major imperialist powers. Whatever the Tories say Britain is still suffering from relative decline. In terms of productivity it has been left behind by Japan, the USA, Federal Germany, France and is being caught up by Italy and even South Korea. The outbreak of a new general crisis will only make matters worse. It would be stupid therefore to say 'it can't happen here'.

Yes, Germany has got many important lessons for us. Because of social democratic treachery the workers in Germany failed to make their October. The price for this is too well known to need repeating. If we too fail then our bourgeoisie in Britain would call forth a British version of Adolf Hitler and Nazism. That is not scaremongering. It is history's warning.

Put to the test: Labourism

Having put the Great Strike into context let us now see how the organisations of the workers' movement served the class in practice.

For mainstream Labourism the miners' strike was the result of a combination of Thatcher's irrationality and Scargill's syndicalistic ambitions ... and no more. It certainly had nothing to do with Kinnoch's understanding of politics and he did his damndest to distance himself and the leadership of the Labour Party from it. The leaders of the TUC were no different.

Both Kinnoch and Willis went out of their way to attack the justified violence of the miners. Of course this was not because they were pacifists. They support the terror being perpetrated by British troops in the six occupied counties of Northern Ireland as they did the reoccupation of the Falkland Islands and historically just about every war British imperialism has ever conducted. What these pro-imperialist reactionaries objected to was *workers' violence*. Frankly, both Ramsay MacKinnock and Judas Willis richly deserve the hangman's noose.

What about the left Labourites? Even now Tony Benn is saying that the miners' strike was a victory. Not for the Tories you understand. No he says it was a victory for the working class! This is typical of the other worldliness of the Labour left.

a meeting in London last the miners' Great Strike

rs on



vertheless we would not for one moment that Labour leftists supported the miners a rank and file level Labour Party sts provided the backbone for the sup- committees. And for all his daftness called for a general strike and spoke for miners the length and breadth of the na- Politically, though, there's a fundamen- problem, a far bigger problem than anism. The Labour left is tied body and o the Kinnocks, Hattersleys, Goulds and ext Labour government'.

e tragic consequences of the Labour politics could be seen in the leadership of ur Scargill during the Great Strike. While as intransigent, while not caving in and ly agreeing to massive closures and job s, he conducted the strike using the ods inherited from the days of consensus cs. Scargill thought he could secure a y with the tactics of 1972 and 1974.

ause of this the whole strategy of the as flooded. When it came down to it ted his links with Kinnock, Hattersley he left-talking union leaders such as on, Knapp, Todd, and Slater higher independent rank and file action. His cry was the *Plan for coal* and the 'next ur government', not a general strike and ers' power.

rgill's 'hands off' message to the TUC e first half of the strike did not put it or iliates on the spot. When militant min- miners Support Groups and others raised uestion of a general strike the reply from them, from Ron Todd right over to Bill was that the NUM has not asked for it. ill's tactics let them off the hook.

only by fighting for a united workers' sive, a general strike with or without the going over the heads of the existing rships, could a victory be delivered. This ot Scargill's perspective. I remember the n Committee's 'lobby' of the TUC. ously, instead of being outside the on Conference Centre where the TUC meeting it held a rally several miles down ad. The only people lobbying delegates out to be the WRP, the SWP, Lenin- and a small group of militant miners. The n for this soon became clear. Arthur ill, Peter Heathfield and Mick McGahey d a 'solidarity' resolution. In return ill agreed to hold off his 'Red Army'.

He got what he asked for. On the floor of the congress Ron Todd promised a 'big bang', there were many fine speeches. But even as the vote to 'support' the NUM was being taken, the leaders of the engineering union and most importantly the EETPU (whose members run the power stations) were telling anyone who would listen that they weren't going to deliver anything. Then of course, in spite of a resounding vote to support the NUM, in practice the other unions were not exactly different.

Most certainly they were not prepared to link up their own members who were in struggle with the miners. The two strikes by the dockers, especially the first one, really did get the bourgeoisie rattled. Joined with the miners it could have triggered a generalised strike wave. Precisely because of this T&G spokesmen went out of their way to make it clear that the strike was purely about defending the dock labour scheme. It was nothing to do with the miners' strike, they emphasised. There were, though, other examples of struggles that could have and should have been linked to the miners' strike but weren't.

The potentially powerful British Leyland carworkers' unions were attacked using the Tories' anti-trade union laws, the same laws that were used to rob the NUM of its funds. No attempt whatsoever was made to unite the BL workers in militant action alongside the miners. In fact the opposite was the case.

To 'preserve the dock labour scheme' T&G members agreed to move imported coal into Britain and in the same way to 'preserve jobs' BL convenor - and Euro - Jack Adams turned a blind eye to coal deliveries. The leaders of the NUR and Aslef were from the same mould. Ray Buckton and Jimmy Knapp did nothing to spread or for that matter publicise the militant solidarity action by rank and file railworkers.

When the railway unions decided to call a token 'day of action' in support of their Coal-ville members in Leicestershire - who refused to move any coal - they did not tell the London branches anything about it. Yet Scargill did not protest. He did not organise agitation teams of NUR militants, Aslef militants alongside NUM militants to win the case for real solidarity. In short, he had no political strategy for victory.

As far as he was concerned all the NUM needed to do was to stop the production of coal and then wait till stocks ran out (time and time again he assured us that reserves at power stations were down to the levels of 'molehills'). In this way, Scargill believed, the country would come to a halt, the government would cave in, and then, as he said in the early part of the strike, the years of Thatcherism would be 'rolled back'. The truth was that the government was not playing by the rules of the early 1970s.

It was well aware that this was no economic struggle. Thatcher was out to break the NUM, the 'enemy within', because it had humiliated the previous Tory government and because it was still the most combative union in the country. Having criticised Scargill it is of course important not to dismiss him as just a run of the mill sellout trade union bureaucrat. He fought bravely and, to the extent that his politics allowed, militantly. Nonetheless Scargill could not deliver victory at the end of the day simply because he was a prisoner of left reformism.

Put to the test: 'official communism'

During the Great Strike the 'official communists' at the head of the CPGB were in effect indistinguishable from the left Labourites. At best the McLennan leadership and the Chater alternative simply constituted themselves an adjunct of the NUM.

The *Marxism Today* faction by and large kept its rightist criticisms of Scargill and the miners close to their chests. They lacked the confidence at that time to openly voice their views (things changed with defeat). Apart from joining the *Morning Star* in condemning the killing of the scab taxi driver Wilkie and wishing the miners a happy Christmas, the Euros only contribution was to advocate that the miners and the pit women employ Greenham Common tactics against the police! Not surprisingly this advice was not taken up.

The politics of the right centrists around *Straight Left/Communist* and the New Communist Party were likewise no different from the leadership of the NUM, except that they considered it their 'communist' duty to excuse the scabbing by the Polish government which allowed huge amounts of coal to be exported to Britain.

Put to the test: revolutionary left

The Labourites and the 'official communists' were well and truly shown up by the miners' Great Strike, exposed as being windbags, doubledealers or simply inadequate. What of the revolutionary left?

It is worth noting that all petty bourgeois revolutionary left groups claim that the CPGB 'betrayed' the 1926 General Strike because it fostered illusions in reformism through the slogan 'All power to the TUC'. The CPGB certainly made mistakes in 1926. Nonetheless it played an honourable role. Without it there would have been no general strike, during which half its members suffered arrest. So how did its latter-day critics fare when they were put to the test?

In a word, awfully. The Trotskyist entryists were united in one thing - they wanted to channel the raw class energy into their dead end project of transforming the Labour Party! In the name of this they advocated a variety different tactics, though usually well to the right of the most militant leaders of the NUM. Thus when Jack Collins, president of Kent NUM, backed the call made by *The Leninist* for a general strike and the transformation of the support groups into Councils of Action, *Militant* and *Socialist Action* opposed it.

What of those not part of Labourism organisationally? They either suffered from the same sort of rightism as the entryists or the most monstrous sectarianism, or a combination of both.

The SWP was brilliantly bad. At the beginning of the strike its leader, Tony Cliff, described it as "an extreme example of the downturn", ie an "extreme" example of the class struggle being at a low level! This was no aberration. Throughout the year of this truly historic strike his followers kept repeating the 'downturn' nonsense.

Inevitably this affected their practice. For the first six months of the strike the SWP could see nothing positive in the Miners' Support Committees. Yet, after having contemptuously dismissed them as being no good for anything apart from collecting baked beans and money, the SWP did a complete flip.

For the rest of the strike it became the most determined advocate of limiting the support committee's to collecting baked beans and money. To fulfil the downturn prophecy it did its utmost to block moves to involve them in picketing, and of course agitation for a general strike was considered most unsuited to 'the period'. The same rightism meant that it opposed the independent organisation of the rank and file and economically attacked the hit squads as examples of 'individual violence'.

Towards the end of the strike, when defeat looked a distinct possibility, the SWP did a Pontius Pilate. Instead of putting forward ways to draw other sections of the working class into the fray, the SWP simply wrote it off as finished. Chris Harman, the SWP's No2, put this in a nutshell. Against those who were arguing for a general strike he wrote that "this isn't 1925 or 1926, this is much more like 1927". The implication was clear. Nothing could be done, the working class had already suffered a strategic defeat!

Then there was the Revolutionary Communist Party. Criminally, it put cheap publicity above the interests of the working class. It wanted to be noticed no matter what. For the first half of the strike the main 'contribution' from the RCP was to "vigorously campaign" for a ballot!

We never dismissed ballots as being anti-proletarian, or some such silliness. But whatever problems the lack of a ballot caused in

the way the strike was started, for example the banner it gave Llynk, campaigning after 100,000 miners had voted with their feet was treacherous. The RCP was hated by NUM rank and file militants. And rightly so.

Naturally, given its sectarianism, the RCP stood aside from the Miners' Support Committees because they were Labourite dominated! So the RCP organised its own ineffective and tiny pickets of power stations. This was stunt politics, not Marxist politics.

Other left groups were more cause for mirth than anything else.

For example the Spartacist League and the WRP inhabited a world of their own making. Neither of these groups dealt with what was, rather how they would like things to be and, like the RCP, they boycotted the Miners' Support Committees because they were Labourite dominated (funny considering that members of both groups hold Labour Party membership cards).

Of course, the Councils of Action that Lenin called embryonic soviets in 1920 were actually set up by the TUC and were most certainly Labourite dominated. In the same way, the Petrograd Soviet of 1905 and soviets of 1917 were not born ready made. They started off as strike committees and tended to be under the leadership of Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks till the latter quarter of 1917. But some will never learn.

Aftermath

What the Great Strike showed above all was that the working class in Britain lacked a genuine Communist Party. The Labour Party proved itself yet again a reactionary organisation, an agent of the bourgeoisie. As to those 'parties' which consider themselves 'alternatives', they showed that they were neither parties nor alternatives.

The Great Strike was undoubtedly an acid test for all theories. And as it was also a great defeat, this doubled the power of the shock waves that have buffeted the entire left since it ended. Those not firmly based on Marxism-Leninism have sought refuge either by scurrying to the right or through reinforcing their sectarianism.

The SWP has turned itself into little more than a Victorian socialist society, the RCP prefers the 'politics of discourse' to practice. Others, including the WRP and *Socialist Action*, shattered into smithereens. As to the Labour left, it is now in total disarray. *Militant* has moved still further to the right and Bennism has lost all its old influence; it fragmented and, lured by the promise of office, droves of former adherents opted for Kinnockism (no wonder the word 'Bennism' has fallen into disuse).

A not dissimilar fragmentation has affected 'official communism'. The Euros have always 'travelled light'. Because of this they already stand to the right of Benn, Scargill, Skinner etc. For them the Great Strike was the dying gasp of working class politics. In reality it was the dying gasp of what they lead as a party. The CPGB now only exists as history and, for Leninists, an aim.

No organisation that has even the most shallow roots in the working class could have been unaffected by the inevitable negative consequences of the defeat of the Great Strike. But the task of a genuine communist organisation is not only to protect itself by purging itself of soft elements (one way or another), it must learn. This is something *The Leninist* has done, uniquely it seems.

As we have said, for us the miners' Great Strike gave us a glimpse of the future. It was worth 1,000 editions of the opportunists' programme, the *British Road to Socialism*.

Reformists constitute themselves an elite, draw up utopian intricate schemes whereby the bourgeois state will be used to introduce socialism. The masses are left as the supporting caste. Marxist-Leninists, on the other hand, see the masses as the makers of history. During periods of intense class struggle they perform creative miracles. It was they who 'thought up' the Commune, not Marx or Engels; it was they who 'thought up' the soviets, not Lenin; it was they who 'thought up' the support committees, not *The Leninist*.

Communists learn from the masses; Marx and Engels did, Lenin did and so has *The Leninist*. When asked what the dictatorship of the proletariat in Britain will look like, we say look at the miners' Great Strike. Although it had many features of past industrial struggles, it will be "celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society" (Marx on the Paris Commune). In this lies the historic significance of the Great Strike.

Easter in Belfast

EASTER in West Belfast has a meaning other than chocolate eggs and the old resurrection fable. Revolutionary republicans commemorate the rising in Dublin in 1916 when the Irish Citizen Army of James Connolly and a section of the Irish Volunteers created through their actions one of the most heroic chapters in Irish history. This is a constant source of inspiration in the fight against imperialism today. For those involved in this fight Easter is a time when they honour their dead in the latest, twenty year long, phase of the struggle as well as the martyrs of 1916.

The Leninist was therefore pleased to accept the invitation of the Irish Republican Socialist Party to send a delegation to Belfast at this time to both join the Irish Republican Socialist Movement Easter commemoration. Towards the end of our stay a period of time was allocated for discussion between our delegation and the IRSP.

It was our first visit to since our jointly organised summer school in 1987 (see *The Leninist*, October 8 1987). Developments made by the party since then are encouraging. It has survived state harassment, and renewed threats from the breakaway Irish Peoples Liberation Organisation early this year, to establish itself more firmly in Ireland, north and south.

One Leninist comrade had an all too close brush with the former when he and three IRSP comrades were pulled over and held for nearly two hours by a heavily armed British Army and RUC road block on the Falls Road. One comrade was nearly knocked out from a blow to the head and grabbed by the throat. The "we'll get you bastards" threats to the three IRSP comrades were combined with "what's a nice boy like you doing in a place like this?" approach to the Leninist comrade.

Statements from the bigots of the RUC to the effect that they were there to 'protect' ordinary people in West Belfast against "a small minority of murdering terrorists" were interrupted when they turned to verbally abuse a passing pregnant nationalist woman, who retorted that they should "fuck off back to the Shankill". She obviously was not overwhelmed with gratitude for their 'protection'. Just another policing action - or a systematic tool of repression? The nationalist people of West Belfast have no doubt who the real terrorists are.

On being released from the tender mercies of the crown forces the comrades made their way to the start of the march along the Falls. About 200 people marched with the IRSP, with our banner fighting its way through the oncoming wind somewhere in the middle. Though small, the march was impressively disciplined. The British left may shamble on demos, but the IRSP stewards ensured that the march kept to ordered ranks of three. The culture of resistance in the Six Counties seems to make such discipline almost instinctive.

The commemoration culminated in a ceremony in the Irish Republican Socialist Movement plot at the cemetery. The assembled crowd heard the role of honour for members IRSP and Inla who had given their lives in this 20 year long war.

Comrade Mary Clinton, until recently a POW in Maghaberry, read the proclamation of the Irish Republic from 1916. Comrade Kevin McQuillan then gave the oration from the leadership of the IRSM. He emphasised the need for working class leadership in the struggle:

"We ... see the limitations of the purely nationalist struggle. The cause of labour cannot be put on the back burner. A conference of elected representatives, and representatives from the community including the church to decide on the future of the Irish people after a British withdrawal, which Sinn Fein is advocating, offers nothing at all to the working class.

"Connolly foresaw a similar problem in 1916 when he urged the Irish Citizen Army to hold on to its guns in the event of victory because the fight would not be over until the social struggle had been won. We believe that



Belfast Easter 1989: solidarity

to ensure total victory we must forge something which Connolly neglected to do; we must build a strong party, of and for the working class ... We must draw strength from the courage and dedication shown by the rebels of 1916 and by our own volunteers who we remember here today. Imperialism will not keel over and die by itself, it must be incessantly harried and finally crushed.

"Only a united and militant working class strengthened by support from the working class from Britain and Europe and led by a genuine Communist Party can achieve this."

The Sinn Fein commemoration was considerably bigger - with between three to four thousand people. Confident and large, such events as this nail the lie that the republican movement enjoys no mass base of support. There is no single organisation in the Six Counties which can mobilise those numbers. A genuine Communist Party able to dig roots in the working class would be able to take this onto a higher plane. That must be the central aim of all who call themselves communists in Ireland.

Each year the roles of honour at the republican and republican socialist plots are heard by a crowd who are inspired by, and fill the places of, their fallen comrades. But it is worth noting that they do so, unlike Connolly's Irish Citizen Army, on the basis of nationalist politics. Even the IRSP's march was lead off by a colour party carrying the Irish tricolour in the fore - a bourgeois symbol, even if with revolutionary democratic connotations in the Six Counties.

The best forces who fought in 1916, drawing inspiration from Connolly, after the October revolution were looked to the young Soviet Republic and the Communist International. Their banner was the red flag of world socialist revolution. Symbolism, especially in a country with Ireland's revolutionary traditions, is important. If the IRSP, as its oration states, is to build a genuine Communist Party it must win workers from the orange, white and green to the red. That is not to deny the importance of the national question: it is to proclaim communism as the only way to national liberation and socialism.

Hands Off Ireland!

In the days following the commemoration we had a series of scheduled meetings with the IRSP. The first of these covered the question of solidarity, in particular the question of the Hands Off Ireland! initiative. We explained the basis of the campaign and how it was progressing.

We argued that Hands Off Ireland! could and should represent a basis for the establishment of a principled anti-imperialist movement based on the working class in Britain. Leninist comrades also emphasised (as we did

in the review of the last issue in our review of *Starry Plough*) that such a movement could not be built through abstract calls for left unity, but only through active anti-imperialist work to achieve working class unity against their own imperialist state, no matter how few groups might initiate this (see the interview opposite).

Both the confusion on the left and the potential for work on the question was reflected in an ensuing meeting on the question encompassing other groups who had joined the IRSP commemoration. Irish groups such as the Communist Party of Ireland and Peoples Democracy and a wide range of British left groups were invited.

Of these, only ourselves, the RDG and Red Action showed. A member of the latter outlined what he thought was needed: a broad 'withdrawal' movement (which seemed little different than 'Time To Go') and alongside this a 'solidarity' movement, with 'harder' slogans than 'troops out now' and 'self determination'.

We disagreed and argued that what was needed was an unequivocal anti-imperialist movement; that 'withdrawal' movements like 'Time To Go' were reactionary blind alleys and that 'hard' slogans specifically on the - note, tactical - armed struggle were no guarantee against opportunism. Just look at the old IMG, who back in the early '70s were calling for 'Victory to the IRA' but whose fragment the Socialist League now heads 'Time To Go'.

We also rejected accusations of 'exclusion' from HOI! levelled by both this comrade and the RDG (who also accused us of lying - ah, the heady level of polemic). Anyone who can agree with the two slogans and the need for an anti-imperialist contingent on the 'TTG' demo on August 12 can join. A peculiar form of exclusion, don't you think? HOI! was backed up by other comrades not representing *The Leninist*.

Once, again from Red Action, correctly stated that the organisations who walked away from the campaign did so giving a variety of reasons, and that this reflected far more the problems of the British left than any with Hands Off Ireland!. An IRSP comrade agreed, stating that given the current state of affairs with solidarity work in Britain, HOI!'s slogans were the correct ones, which all anti-imperialists should be able to organise around.

All in all though a productive - if slightly repetitive - couple of meetings, which we hope at least cleared some of the fog generated by previous debates for the IRSP.

Building the Party

Our second discussion with the IRSP was, for us, the most interesting. The bulk of this was

concerned with the development of the IRSP over the recent period. As we outlined above, there have been continual attacks on the party over this period; from the state, north and south, to the Iplo goons.

As with all situations for revolutionaries, there are many other objective problems, which we would say that the party subjectively succumbs to. The crucial question in which this is manifested is, as we have reasoned previously, the paper. *An Camcheachtal-Starry Plough*. At the moment this is scheduled as a bimonthly. Is this in any way adequate to take up the immediate tasks of the IRSP?

The Leninists of the Communist Party of Turkey identified the tasks of the communist paper as follows: "The Central Organ 'is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser'. Collective propaganda and ideological leadership are ensured by a newspaper which solves the theoretical problems of the revolution, elaborates party policy, and thus provides the most advanced guidance to party members. Collective agitation refers to the newspaper's ability to draw the masses into action. Collective organisation means organising among the broadest mass of workers and circles of sympathisers by means of and on the basis of the newspaper." (*Conference of the Leninists of the CPT Resolutions 1980*, p21). This is the criterion by which we must judge the effectiveness of the *Starry Plough*.

In terms of the role of the paper as an educator - its propagandist function - a bimonthly cannot effectively fill this role. The *Starry Plough* has a huge task ahead of it here. It is in a society, though sections of it are in revolutionary turmoil, which is dominated by bourgeois ideas. And because of where the IRSP has developed from - left nationalism - it is, almost by definition, characterised by eclecticism. Such eclecticism cannot be wished away; it must be fought openly in the pages of the paper. This will no doubt generate wideranging debate not only in the party but with militants throughout Irish society.

One example is the question of the broad front, a discussion on which was initiated in the last edition of the *Starry Plough*. Given the present stand of Sinn Fein, the importance of this tactic in the evolution of the IRSP and pivotal questions on the development of a Communist Party and the relation of this to united fronts, this is a vital debate. It is a debate, we were told, which has been taken on with much enthusiasm in the IRSP. This is excellent, and we are confident that the confused nature of the initial article will be rectified.

But such a debate must take place in front of class conscious workers, so that they may take sides and be won to those ideas, and hence to the party - precisely the point that the IRSP make in the letters page of this edition of *The Leninist*. But how can such a crucial discussion gather momentum and

adherents when it only appears six times a year? One would turn a deep shade of blue holding one's breath for the next shot, or just get fed up.

The enthusiasm which IRSP comrades are showing for such ideological struggle must be transmitted to others: this cannot be done through a bimonthly. Solving the theoretical problems of the revolution necessitates far more frequent publication and a stronger assertion of consistent communist theory from the leadership. Only in this way can a programmatic basis for a Communist Party be established and workers in Ireland won to it.

Ideologically, the revolutionary paper is not just limited to such debates. It must respond to and challenge opportunism within the working class and revolutionary movement. Of major importance in this is to take up the arguments of Sinn Fein and the mis-named Workers Party north and south.

As we said in the last edition of our paper, this cannot be done adequately with a paper which comes out less frequently than the miserable rags of the 'official communist' CPI, let alone the publications of the manifestly irrelevant Trotskyist sects.

The comrades of the IRSP reply that this is because these do not have other obligations, such as POWs to support. This is of course true. But then it always will be. Comrade R Yurukoglu of the Communist Party of Turkey dealt with this problem with regard to the situation there: "We are an organisation which works, and works intensively. We work at a very high tempo. I am sure that this tempo will rise even further as our skins become tougher. Nevertheless, we still hear words to the effect that 'work is mounting, we do not have a free moment'. If not all the time, at least very often, what underlies such words are shortcomings in planning, timelog, setting priorities correctly, or freely delegating jobs and responsibilities." (*The Disintegration of Fascism*, p91).

As the IRSP develops, meets new challenges, its workload and obstacles will become greater. The structures and approach to deal with them must be developed now, or they will eventually swamp the organisation. The opportunist groups of the Irish left should not be the yardstick for communists in Ireland, but what the situation demands. And the situation demands more than a bimonthly.

For communists, as Lenin argued in *What is to be Done*, the paper is central. It is the key to all the party's work, ideological and political. Its frequency of publication, the cutting edge of its polemic, determines how effectively the rest of the party can function. It is this cardinal issue which determines planning, timing and the setting of priorities. Even in the short term, therefore, regular publication would facilitate rather than hamper other work. It is, as the above quoted CPT resolution states, the forum which can draw workers in. And it is workers who through their identification with the paper support both it and the party.

Paradoxically, the greater the frequency of publication, the clearer this will become. Here we come to the function of the paper as an organiser. In action, as well as ideologically, the paper welds the party into one. For such work, even a monthly is inadequate. That is why *The Leninist* had to make the transition from a monthly to a fortnightly – even if an imperfectly achieved one. The development of the organisation and its need to intervene concretely in workers' struggles demanded it, even on the level of mobilisations for demos and the then nascent UWC. And the IRSP exists in a situation with greater immediate tasks and possibilities than do we.

The comrades quite rightly spoke of the necessity of initiating action, not merely, as in the past, responding. As they pointed out, this was badly needed in the north, where any independent lead was absent. Another IRSP comrade raised the question of trade union organisation, both in connection with solidarity work and the work of the IRSP.

For us, the question of the organisation of some British trade unions in Ireland and the demand for the withdrawal of their organisation is diversionary. Groups in Britain which make a point of this do so to avoid taking on the work of challenging British imperialism in Ireland. This is economic and political domination by the British state. It is that which must be challenged by anti-imperialists in Britain.

For communists in Ireland, whereas the British based unions may be more of a block than the Irish based ones, it is a question of degree. The real problem in the unions is the outlook and power of the bureaucracy. In the north it identifies directly with British imperialism, in the south indirectly so through its

identification with the Twenty-six County state.

The fight for union militants in Britain is not one per se against their organisation in Ireland, but a political struggle against the pro-imperialist bureaucracy. In Ireland cross union anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist organisation is needed against the bourgeoisie and all its allies, including those in the bureaucracy of the Irish based unions.

On the latter point there was no contention between ourselves and the IRSP. The idea was floated of an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist cross union organisation. John Mitchell raised a similar idea in the interview in the last edition of *The Leninist* – an Irish equivalent of the communist lead 1920s National Minority Movement, if you like.

In the Twenty-six Counties in particular such an organisation would have the potential to organise workers to resist the state attacks being implemented now, and relate these struggles to the national liberation struggle. Even if communists are not in the position to establish such a class war organisation at the moment, the fight to establish that idea within the working class is of major significance.

To initiate something, let alone major initiatives such as this, a constant intervention by the paper is needed. It must be both ideological and campaigning, propagandist and agitational.

These tasks stand directly before the IRSP. There is a dialectical relationship between the paper, raising the necessary funds for intervention and work among the class. A disciplined approach to raising finance is needed.

This is a political task. Workers who support Sinn Fein, the Sticks or whoever must be won politically as to why they should support the IRSP. This is a battle that one can learn concrete lessons from our own Summer Offensive and the work of the CPT.

With a support base of workers in Turkey – for whom the average wage is well below the minimum wage – and migrant Turkish workers in sweat shops, through the dedicated work of CPT comrades the Party consistently raises large amounts of money for its activities; money which feeds back directly to its presence on the streets and in the workplaces. Communists are in a battle for the hearts, minds and direct involvement of the masses. It is a battle that the CPT has made massive strides forward in, providing an example for ourselves, the IRSP and communists everywhere.

To project the confidence necessary for this is still one of the IRSP's biggest stumbling blocks. It was interesting that many of the party's supporters on the commemoration did not march with it but just walked along the side. The confidence of the party is growing, but there is still far to go. Again, we return to the paper, for the paper stands at the hub of instilling confidence through its ideas and through the organisational forms which it agitates for and which its growing circle of supporters turn into reality.

The comrades' approach still reflects too much the problems of the Irish revolutionary movement rather than the solutions. Because of their approach we felt that there is to great a tendency to be overwhelmed by immediate

tasks and difficulties. But communists, no matter how difficult the situation, must abstract from these immediate difficulties and chart the necessary line of march for the class. For the IRSP we would say that this demands the publication now of a monthly as an openly declared precursor to a fighting communist weekly paper.

What we are dealing with here is not quibbling technicalities with regard to paper production but the principles necessary to forge a genuine Communist Party. Each country presents different difficulties and opportunities, but this does not change these principles which a proletarian organisation must apply: "We may not be fully familiar with the conditions in one country or another, but in this case we are dealing with the principles underlying a Communist Party's tactics. This is very important and, in the name of the Third International, we must clearly state the communist point of view." (Lenin, CW Vol.31, p257)

It is in just this way that we directed our comradely criticisms at the IRSP. This has nothing to do with arrogance and everything to do with genuine proletarian internationalism. In surviving all the attacks on it and coming out with a commitment to building a Communist Party its comrades show a commitment that British revolutionaries can learn from. We hope that this commitment can meet the challenges that the situation demands off them. That demands the use of the *Starry Plough* as a weapon – a weapon more powerful than any AK.

Alan Merrik

While in Belfast Alan Merrik talked to Eamon Mullan of the IRSP – who has recently been excluded from Britain under the PTA – about the state of the solidarity movement and Hands Off Ireland!

Solidarity needed

What is the IRSP's assessment of the current state of the solidarity movement in Britain?

It's practically nonexistent at the present time. What's been described as the 'holy trinity' – the Troops Out Movement, Labour Committee on Ireland and the Irish in Britain Representation Group – are totally ineffectual with regards to any kind of solidarity. Because its slogans have been watered down, TOM is basically a 'bring our boys back home' effort. They don't make these demands from any principled political perspective.

As for our experiences of dealing with them, well most of them are totally Sinn Fein orientated. Certainly they have no time for our own party. They put on meetings and demonstrations on Ireland and consistently refuse to invite us to put our perspective.

There's the example of the Birmingham Hunger Strike Commemoration Committee who refused to send us an invitation, despite the fact that the Republican Socialist Movement lost three comrade Volunteers on hunger strike. When we wrote to request clarification of the situation they actually voted to ignore the letter. We know this because we had a contact there at the time.

The Manchester Martyrs Committee has been much maligned. It had been revived in the early eighties and consistently invited both Sinn Fein and the IRSP as speakers. Last year we got documented proof that Sinn Fein would not speak on the same platform as us. Because the Manchester Martyrs were not coming under Sinn Fein's wing they seem to have taken a decision to pull out. It looks like this may well destroy the commemoration. But that was a very honest approach by people in Manchester who were willing to play the even hand but weren't allowed to do so. Other than that, most of the other experiences we've had have been such as the Birmingham Hunger Strike Committee.

What effect do you think a genuine anti-imperialist movement would have, both in Ireland and in the class struggle in Britain?

We can't have a secure socialist revolution while Britain is still a strong imperialist power. We need the support of the British working class. What a principled solidarity movement must do is to call for a defeat of British forces.

It's those forces being used in Ireland which will be used against a working class upsurge in Britain. Ireland is a training ground for use against future unrest in Britain. British workers can learn important lessons from Ireland. But not so long as they identify with their own state against us.

An orientation towards the working class is both very important but also very difficult. You have a hell of a lot of apathy and deliberate blindness on Ireland to get through. And in the Irish community, you have the fear of the PTA which keeps people back. But in times of severe struggle British workers actually will begin to become aware of what's happening here. The miners' strike is a good example of that. They began to see the connection between the oppression of themselves and the oppression here.

Solidarity work is not 'withdrawal' politics but active support of the defeat of your own state, of the defeat of British imperialism in Ireland and ultimately for the defeat of British imperialism full stop. I don't think the fact that this work has never been done in a consistent way is any accident.

Britain has successfully isolated different struggles; in Ireland, with the miners and now we see it coming up with the dockers. The state is very careful about how it plans and executes its campaigns. It hasn't given an inch on principle. We should do the same. I don't think there is any possible way of getting that through the bureaucracy or its campaigns like 'Time To Go'.

There is a world of difference between those who recognise this and those who stand on a 'bring our boys back home' platform.

The former has great possibilities for the future. Look at the CPGB in the early '20s; its attitude was very solid. What it did then is the sort of serious help we need today. You need to bring it consistently to the British working class that its interests do not lie in subjugating another people. That has to be done.

Many people would argue that, because the field of 'solidarity work' is so narrow at the moment, what is needed is a campaign, such as 'Time To Go', which with its 'broad slogans' can expand the basis for future work by raising the profile of Ireland in Britain. What do you see as the problem with this

approach?

What it lacks is any consistent anti-imperialist political analysis. You can get all the celebrities you like, but what benefit is that to us? 'Time To Go' is not interested in Britain's defeat but in getting an embarrassing situation off its back.

We would argue that 'Time To Go' type politics cannot work, because any challenge to British imperialism in Ireland is a challenge to your own state. If it's to work effectively it must fight with that perspective and with politics which equip it to challenge the state effectively.

Yes, in Britain you can get hundreds of thousands out anti-apartheid demonstrations, but nothing like that on Ireland. It's nice, cosy and safe to talk about South Africa when you're thousands of miles away from all the blood and guts.

Once Britain notes that you are involved in the Irish situation, then you're singled out, watched and harassed. It's a fact that if you don't worry the government then you'll be left alone. But how can you do effective work on Ireland without worrying the government?

We call for support for Hands Off Ireland! because there is nothing else which is putting forward a serious challenge to 'Time To Go'. It would be wrong to ignore 'Time To Go' – it's there and it will obviously attract quite a number of people. What's needed is an intervention on it under different slogans, more militant politics. Hands Off Ireland! has to make that very clear. There is no other correct alternative. The concrete actions of the campaign are what will count with this in the end.

The problem with much solidarity work at the moment is that it's confined to the left groups. But if it's to be successful, Irish solidarity needs the involvement of the mass of the British working class. Marx, in the 1860's with the struggle of the Fenians, obviously saw this as being of great relevance to the British working class. Things haven't changed. It is still true that a nation that oppresses another can never itself be free. British workers cannot go on disregarding their own role – even if it's a passive role – in the subjugation of Ireland.

Sex Scandal

Ludovic Kennedy, *The Trial of Stephen Ward*, Victor Gollancz, London 1987, pp247, £5.95
Anthony Summers and Stephen Dorril, *Honeytrap: The Secret Worlds of Stephen Ward*, Wildenfield and Nicolson, London 1987, pp264, £12.95

WITH the current tabloid cant over Pamela Bodes in full swing and the film *Scandal* now on general release it is worth looking back at the original Profumo scandal and its lessons for today. Looking at Thatcherite Britain it is clear that bourgeois hypocrisy still rules. Its guilt about sex will lead to lies born of the fact that for the ruling class women (attractive young ones, that is) are still considered a commodity to be traded and used as a thing. If anything, the gulf between pretence and practice has got wider. When Victorian values rule, so does hypocrisy.

Inevitably some of the reviewers of *Scandal* have linked the Profumo story with our times — not merely with Bodes and Tory MPs Shaw, Moynihan and Bellingham but the with whole Thatcherite regime. "Much like our times" says Philip French in the *Observer*: "A political party too long in office, a prime minister arrogantly out of touch with currents of opinion, the police and the law used for political purposes", etc, etc. Alexander Walker in the *London Evening Standard* writes of the "bizarrely close parallel it draws between 1963 and 1989". But will Thatcherism risk self destruct if this or that minister indulges in a bit of extra-marital sexual fun and games? We shall see.

Obviously there is a parallel in terms of bourgeois hypocrisy and doubledealing. Jeff Sawtell in his *Morning Star* review of *Scandal* waffles on about decadence (apparently, in his eyes, this includes chain smoking) but does not attempt any historical or class analysis. Marxists though need to go below the surface. After all, the ruling class has always been a pack of hypocritical bastards and horrors, and many of them have chain smoked (at least since the days of Raleigh). Anyway it has certainly been decadent — in the scientific sense — as a class, throughout this century.

There is of course a veritable Profumo-Ward-Keeler industry. For years now it has made a tidy little living with second rate journalistic tittle-tattle, guest stage appearances, TV innuendo, and now a film (born of BBC suffocation). Yet, twenty-five years on, it is clear that only a fraction of the truth is out. The pot is stirred, nothing new is added. Only two works stand out against the showbiz trend, *The Trial of Stephen Ward* and *Honeytrap*.

Ludovic Kennedy, the author of the former, is a past master at exposing the injustices of British justice. From his ringside seat at the trial of Ward he showed how he was used as a pawn by ruling class circles. British intelligence marked him as a "supplier of papsies for rich people" and exploited him for years. Moving in exalted circles, Ward (who at times called himself a communist, but today would be a typical *Marxism Today* devotee) had very wide establishment acquaintanceships.

In the sunlight he was the deft osteopath and a portraitist of some skill. In the shadows he supplied the more base needs of the ruling

class. His contact list ranged from the Duke of Edinburgh and other royalty to the American ambassador who had been US intelligence chief in Europe during the Second World War, from Lord Astor of Cliveden (home of the pro-Nazi faction of pre-war British capitalism, six ministers of the crown were said to be involved) to Peter Rachman, racketeering slum millionaire landlord and from financier Charles Gore to Bob Hope and Douglas Fairbanks jnr.

Ward — the child of middle, middle class parents — aspired to the world of Clarages after dinner chats and old school tie clubroom contacts. He also fancied himself a bit of a James Bond. To a degree he succeeded. On the very Sunday that the Cuban missile crisis broke, Ward was at Cliveden lunching with Lord Astor, Lord Arran (a Tory peer who tried his hand at 'popular' journalism), and Lord Longford the Labour peer, together with Ivanov, the Soviet naval attache.

Ward got in touch with Labour leaders offering mediation over Cuba through Ivanov. Wilson saw Macmillan and the next day flew to Washington and saw President Kennedy. When he came back he had another talk with Macmillan. Ward boasted of his efforts and claimed Ivanov had direct instructions from the Kremlin.

But Ward was a victim. Never considered an insider, once he became an embarrassment Kennedy (Ludovic, that is) details how he was callously dumped and driven to suicide.

The two American authors of *Honeytrap* approach the subject from a different angle. By painstaking sifting of official US papers they reveal why the scandal sent British and US ruling circles into a panic. Summers and Dorril provide overwhelming evidence that Ward and his girls (the 'honeytrap') were used in an attempt to lure Ivanov into defection. They also disclose that President John F Kennedy knew two of the Ward girls (in the biblical sense), and that the White House bureaucracy feared Britain's scandal would compromise their man. Kennedy's 'womanising' was notorious. J Edgar Hoover, US spy supremo, kept extensive files on his sexual adventures.

He was also an obvious prat. In conference with Macmillan at Nassau, reporters apparently heard JFK loudly proclaim over sundown whiskies: "if I go too long without a woman I get a headache." His entourage always made sure that he was well supplied. John Tower would look like an impotent virgin beside him. Mariella Novotny — related to the then Czech leader and London's orgy queen of the time — claimed she had had sex with Kennedy and believed she had been used in a plot to entangle him. The *Honeytrap* authors do not give us answers but rumours were rife in New York, London and Washington.

The Profumo affair, with its swinging sixties peccadilloes of a cabinet minister and cold war intrigue, took place against the background of the long post World War II boom, the 'never had it so good' years. As is well known, once Profumo was shown to have lied to parliament he resigned as Minister of War. Lord Denning came to the rescue. Whitewasher extraordinaire, he reported after a very secret inquiry that British intelligence was squeaky clean. Nonetheless the next month Macmillan resigned as PM.

The Tories had ruled uninterruptedly for 13 years. Macmillan said he would not be brought down by "that girl". But he was. Even though Labour had long been out

of office it was still the alternative party of government. The only real difference between Labour and Tory was a couple of percentage opinion poll points.

This is no longer the case. Labour is now the party of crisis it was in the pre-1945 period. Thatcher's Tories are not only the bourgeoisie's preferred party of government but the dominant party. Because of this, suggestions that they could be brought down by a Profumo type scandal do not stand up to examination.

A Profumo might lead to Thatcher getting rid of a minister or two. A Suez might see her getting the boot upstairs to the House of Lords. But for Thatcherism to go would take an explosion of mass struggle. We have gone beyond the swings and roundabouts two party system with its petty sexual scandals. Our times are the times of class war.

We must not wait for a Profumo or rely on electoral pacts based on 'never mind the quality, look at the width' criteria to get rid of Thatcherism. Mass action and the class struggle are the key to the future, not the 'immoral' behaviour of 'our betters'.

Tony Eastman

In the red

Stephen White, *The Bolshevik Poster*, Yale University Press, 1988, pp152, unpriced.

EVERY eye witness of the October Revolution and the civil war which followed was struck by its posters. They were absolutely everywhere. The messages and demands they expressed were considered so vital that many bore the slogan, "Anyone tearing down this poster commits a counterrevolutionary act".

As in so many other areas, the revolution unleashed imaginative forces in posterwork way beyond any other period of history, before or since. The unparalleled quality and quantity are reflected in this lavishly illustrated, well researched book. Thankfully, it avoids the clichéd layout used on the many recent coffee table books on the revolution, produced, presumably, for the armchair socialists.

One of the most valuable things about this book is its ability to serve as a case study of art being used as a weapon. Artists worked for the revolution by producing something which was both beautiful and useful. Like the great revolutionary writings of Lenin, these posters were produced in the heat of struggle, were products of their time. Nonetheless their power lives on. There are many valuable lessons for revolutionary artists today and for the political forces which want to draw them to its ranks.

White begins by tracing the origins of the Bolshevik poster from its pre-revolutionary sources. He shows that revolutionary art is not something produced brand new and squeaky clean but develops from the society which preceded the revolution.

There were four main sources, two of which connected the Soviet political poster with some of the oldest traditions of Russian graphic art, namely the *lubok* and the icon.

The *lubok* was the peasant illustrated woodcut or broadside. It developed in Russia from the early seventeenth century and its simple narrative style served well for posters aimed at the countryside. The iconographic tradition was used, particularly its use of colour, with red predominating, together with its ability to make the broad-

est possible appeal. This is not to say that the posters gave any concessions to religion, the opposite in fact. One of the most popular forms of poster was the triptych of Tsar, priest and kulak as the enemies of the people. Indeed, posters attacking or lampooning them became a kind of symbol of the whole revolutionary epoch.

The more contemporary influences on the Soviet poster were the satirical journals which had flourished in Russia since the beginning of the century and the pre-revolutionary advertising poster.

Most of the artists who produced the posters during the heady years of 1918 to 1920 were not communists. They were servants of the new, proletarian, order. Given the importance which the Bolsheviks attached to mass propaganda, they recognised that artists' talents must be put to maximum use. They made sure there was material incentive for these artists to work with them and many responded to the call. Having produced work for the Tsarist war effort they now produced work for the communists. After all, they had to make a living.

This is not to say that the artists had been apolitical prior to the revolution. As White shows in his detailed biographies, almost all had been involved in the 1905 struggles. This was when they cut their teeth in a political sense. Art was recognised as a potent weapon in the hands of the forces struggling to free Russia from the shackles of the old order.



1920: 'Comrade Lenin sweeps the world'

One artist who had joined the Bolsheviks before the revolution, in 1908 when he was fourteen, was Vladimir Mayakovsky. He has become better known for his poetry but he personified the urgency and inventive fury of Soviet posterwork in the civil war years. Indeed, White has done us a service by exposing the position of those bourgeois art critics who have tried to denigrate Mayakovsky's poster work as a tragic waste of his talents. Fortunately, White recognises the importance of the revolution and the key role it played in Mayakovsky's artistic development.

The Russian Telegraphy Agency (Rosta), the press bureau set up in September 1918 to collect and disseminate information, became a sort of syndicate of the Soviet press. Agitation was also one of its main tasks and the 'Rosta windows' rapidly became the focus of Mayakovsky's poster work.

Initially, the Rosta windows were posters with simple text put up in the many empty shop windows of Petrograd and Moscow but soon filled every available public place. Although, on principle, all Rosta work was collective, Mayakovsky soon became acknowledged as director of the enterprise and established the format of concentrating on a single theme treated in a consecutive series of

frames in the manner of a comic book.

The output of the windows was quite phenomenal. It is estimated that in Moscow alone about 1,600 windows were produced in the period 1919 to 1922, each of which was reproduced about 150 times. This made a total 237,000 individual Rosta windows and, since the average window consisted of about eight individual frames each the size of a poster, this meant that the Moscow Rosta collective alone produced almost two million poster frames!

Moscow was by no means the only centre involved in window production. In fact there were some fifty different centres. This was a revolutionary artistic machine dedicated to the destruction of the counterrevolutionary forces. The artists prided themselves on the speed at which they could respond to the unfolding events, reaching a point where, within forty minutes of receiving an important telegram, a window could be drawn, printed and ready for distribution.

There is much to be learned by those seeking to use art as a revolutionary weapon today. As with everything we must not begin with what is deemed possible but what is necessary.

What was necessary in early days of Soviet Russia was agitating and disseminating information to a population which was largely illiterate. This was done even though the printing industry had been decimated. Although there seems to have been criticism of the futurist and other more experimental forms of poster, it is undoubtedly true that the political posters were hugely popular and played a great role particularly at the time of greatest crisis, around 1919-20, in boosting morale in the Red Army and rallying mass support for the front.

When the threat of counterrevolution receded, the poster for the Comintern came to the fore, along with those connected with economic development and social changes, including women's emancipation and public health. However the rise of centrism in the leadership of the Soviet state led to a rapid decline in poster work in both quality and quantity, particularly by the 1930s.

Nonetheless the new and distinctive Soviet imagery based on symbols such as the hammer and sickle and a worker figure smashing the chains of capitalism binding the world remain as vivid and relevant today as ever. Although television, radio and other forms of mass communication have and will play a revolutionary role, the poster form remains highly potent.

We need the artistic eye which is able to seize upon an image to convey the biggest ideas, the greatest ideas — those of Marxism-Leninism. A reformed CPGB will undoubtedly produce brilliant posters as part of its struggle to inspire the masses with revolutionary anger and enthusiasm.

Gavin Kyle

69 and all that

Michael Farrell (ed), *Twenty Years On*, Brandon, 1988, pp160, £4.95.

WHEN the present political struggle started in the Six Counties one of the more dynamic groups was Peoples Democracy. Now it has all but collapsed. *Twenty Years On* represents the reflections of some of those who were at the time lead-

ing members.

It claimed to be Marxist, a title then only associated with the discredited Communist Party of Ireland and Official Sinn Féin, today's Workers Party. PD's 'Marxism' was of a Trotskyist bent. This led it to link itself with the now defunct British International Marxist Group, an affiliate to one of the versions of the 'Fourth International'.

The late 60s were a period of political turmoil. The sons and daughters of Catholic parents were increasingly seeing the old establishments of many countries being challenged by members of their own generation. With the increasing demand for skilled office labour new layers of Catholic youth in the Six Counties had access to higher education for the first time. Amongst this strata revolution became a fashion.

Che Guevara posters were on the wall of every good bed-sit. Vietnam was the main news item each day. Talk was of Paris and Chicago where the students battled with police. Even Eastern Europe became an inspiration because students were in the forefront of anti-bureaucratic protests. Not surprisingly to many it seemed that revolutionary change would come not from the working class but through student action.

These events had a profound effect on the contributors. But perhaps it was the civil rights movement in the USA which had the biggest impact. The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement experienced an explosive growth and many of the idealistic young men and women who went on to form PD found themselves playing a leading role.

The civil rights movement brought together under its umbrella 'official communist', republican, liberal, PD and even some Unionists. This fragile alliance was not to last long. The civil rights movement had inevitably taken the stopper out of the Unionist bottle and allowed the revolutionary genie to escape. For the next twenty years Britain was to try and force it back in and return the Six Counties to the dusty top shelf of sanitised bourgeois politics.

In the Six Counties, unlike in the USA, the demand for civil rights threatened the existence of state. "The civil rights struggle had not raised the constitutional question", writes Gerry Adams, "but the reaction of the state and the active British intervention in support of the state brought the constitutional question to the fore, and the existence of the Six County state into question" (p49).

Elis McDermott, then a young student PD member, remembers the RUC wrecking nationalist homes in the Bogside in early January 1969. Looking back she comments, "I was somehow not surprised. It was slowly dawning on me that by demanding elementary reforms we were - without meaning to be - a threat to the state" (p151).

Many of those who formed PD were, or had been members of, the Trotskyist Young Socialists or League for a Workers Republic. These organisations provided the ideological wrapping for PD. Yet from the start PD lacked a serious revolutionary programme. It was more a collection of left students than a revolutionary party.

McDermott recalls how PD was formed one wet Wednesday night: "It was agreed that anyone could be a member of Peoples Democracy so long as they thought everyone should have a vote, a job and a house, that the Special Powers Act should be repealed and that the B-Specials should be disbanded. In theory five people could make a

decision in the name of Peoples Democracy just as well as five hundred. There were no membership cards or subscriptions fees. Everyone was welcome - the more the merrier" (p149). Such an organisation had more in common with anarchism than Marxism.

Perhaps PD is now best remembered for the election in 1969 which got the fiery Bernadette Devlin into the House of Commons. But the fact that PD suddenly found itself with an MP and a mass following sowed the seeds of destruction. Because of its Trotskyite politics PD could not fight for revolution in practice. We were "confounded", writes Michael Farrell of the election of Devlin. "Ultra-leftism about parliament and our own loose structure meant we did not know what to do with an MP. The result was confusion and some resentment between Peoples Democracy and its new MP" (p59). In fact the PD found itself in terminal crisis.



Bernadette Devlin: MP and street fighter

So what has happened to all these student activists? The vast majority of those associated with PD have during the past twenty years have moved to the right. Some are still politically active, such as Farrell and Devlin, but many have drifted out of politics altogether. In the south the Irish Labour Party has attracted a fair few, while in the north there was Sinn Féin.

Geoffrey Bell personifies the collapse of PD. He started his political career as a radical young member of the Northern Ireland Labour Party with links to the Trotskyite Young Socialists. Today we find him a loyal member of the British Labour Party. Like many an erstwhile student revolutionary he looks to the Labour Party to do something about Ireland. Bell points to the mass campaigns on Vietnam, South Africa and nuclear weapons in contrast to the lack of mass activity on Ireland. He concludes that "governments from 1968 onwards have been able to get away with anything they wanted in Ireland" (p99). Bell believes that governments will get away with this until the Labour Committee on Ireland and the Labour Party get their acts together.

We have already quoted the only interloper in this book, Gerry Adams, who seems to have been made an honorary student. His experience is very different to all the other contributors. Adams' inclusion has more to do with what he represents today rather than what he was doing in 69.

But all the contributors would like to see some form of alliance, covering the left of the British Labour Party and trade union bureaucrats and Gerry Adams' Sinn Féin. Their politics in the past would have put them in opposition to 'Time To Go', today they all in behind it.

Bell, harking back to the politics his leftist youth, recalls that at the second congress of the Comintern in 1920 British delegates were criti-

cised for not doing more on Ireland. "The attitude to the English workers towards Ireland is the measure of the clarity of the communist mode of thought" they were told. When they protested that British workers would see any revolt against imperialism as a treasonable they were told in no uncertain terms, "It must be said that the faster the English workers learn to commit such treason, the better it will be for the revolutionary movement" (p104).

Treason is long overdue. But who really expects Bell's Labour Party to commit it?

Tony Coughlain

Read retreat

Reading Branch CPGB, *Reading Communist Review*, No2. Winter 1988/9, pp29, 50p (or £1 each/£4.50 for 10 including p&p from: Reading CPGB, PO Box 160, Reading, RG5 4JF)

THE WIDEST possible theoretical and educational work is called for in this second issue of the journal of Reading Branch of the CPGB - a mixture of ex-Morning Star centrists and ex-WRP Trotskyites, with a membership of 32. To this end it openly publishes its discussions, critical of the Euro leadership, inviting articles and bulk orders, with (so far, at least) no disciplinary repercussions from above.

For communists, openness is no luxury. Only through open ideological struggle can we sharpen our revolutionary theory to thrash out a clear world view and reforge the genuine Communist Party which the working class urgently needs in this period of class confrontation, for which the miners' Great Strike was merely the opener.

Unfortunately, however, far from being communist revolutionaries fighting to retrieve, defend and develop the truths of Marxism-Leninism which have been forgotten, neglected and distorted by the communist movement during the long ripening of its opportunism, the Reading comrades are part of the problem not the solution. Disorientated by Gorbachev's discarding of old centrist beliefs, the disintegration of 'official communism' and all that seemed certain they have they have retreated into political agnosticism.

In discussion, one of their leading comrades told us that it is wrong to claim to know the answers. For them it is good to have discussions, but wrong to draw conclusions, "the Euros were wrong, but so were we." Not surprisingly he was unsure whether or not he would still call himself a Leninist. This reflects a general problem with the writers of *Reading Communist Review*.

Because they have no particular standpoint they are only able to snipe at the Euros, pointing up their inconsistencies instead of offering the revolutionary communist alternative, and even seek to make "a positive input into the [reformist] *British Road to Socialism* debate". For instance, Will Gee criticises the Euros' theory of post-Fordism by demonstrating that "two of the main tenets of Fordism, standardisation and mechanisation of tasks, are cornerstones of this post-Fordist society." In other words he accepts the Euros terms of reference. This leads him to clutch at the most amazing straw: apparently there are significant "implications ... for

the struggle for socialism" in the "quality groups", in which Japanese workers and management examine work methods! "Will not ... the search for a better way of running society as a whole ... become a logical extension of quality groups and competitive tendering? ... the seeds are being firmly planted by these new work practices."

Eric Shelton-Jones, in the first of a series of articles on the working class defines a member of that class as - "a person who has to sell their labour power to an employer in order to obtain the means of subsistence of life". This takes no account of the reserve army of labour in the form of the pool of female and unemployed workers or the fact that members of the middle class also sell their labour power.

In spite of this leading to an underestimation of the size of the working class his general point that the working class in Britain is not shrinking nor its political importance fading is true. However comrade Shelton-Jones draws no firm revolutionary conclusions from this. Instead he writes about how "political strategies for the ending of capitalist exploitation and advance to socialism" should be based on the growth of the working class. This is a mealy-mouthed fudging of the task of making revolution!

Eddie Dawson correctly identifies Dave Good's ostensible attack on dogmatism (in *RCR* No1) - with such glib phrases as "the orthodoxies of yesterday ... the hallowed word ... outdated concepts," etc - as an attack on Marxism as such, but then treats him with kid gloves. Amazingly he presents this Euro-style rejection of Marxism-Leninism as "a typical leftist error" (my emphasis - *IF*).

(Dawson makes a slip - a misprint, perhaps - in referring to methodological innovations made by Marx in the 1880s (sic) which enabled him to make his revolutionary discoveries in economics. Marx died on March 14 1883 after a lifetime's work on *Das Kapital*!).

Dave Good continues his gallop to the right in this issue of *RCR* with a review, on behalf of "those in the communist movement engaged in rethinking the conceptual foundations of Marxism" (no half measures here!), of Maurice Bloch's *Marxism and Anthropology*. Instead of knocking down Aunt Sallies, as some lesser critics do, Good has the merit of rejecting clearly stated sound Marxist positions.

The view that "the precursor of class divided society was an ancient classless society" has "proven unfounded", and "Contemporary anthropology refutes the former (stagist) view" of Marx on the

"schemas of socio-economic formation (eg feudalism or capitalism) and ... his [Marx's] idea of revolution as the necessary form [sic] of the transition from one formation to another." Of course, this ditching of communist principles is fully in line with Gorbachevism, and Good writes glowingly of "the cultural renaissance underway in the Soviet Union".

In Jim Cook's report of his summer 1988 trip to the USSR he tells us what we all know about the horrors of bureaucratic planning but his remedy, instead of democratic planning, is the market, which he kids himself is not capitalism. He has some interesting comments on the progress of glasnost, showing that the re-examination of history had not yet reached back to the 1920s, and the myth of a 'golden age' under Lenin will fall apart with the publication in 1989 of Trotsky's works.

Nevertheless, Cook looks with rose tinted glasses at the present Soviet government and, mesmerised by its rhetoric about examining past errors, fails to notice its criminal sellout of living revolutions, for example in Afghanistan the withdrawal of Soviet troops will allow the weakest socialist state to fall prey to counterrevolution.

Paul Timperley gives an uncritical and somewhat fawning review of the Euro Dr Steve Iliffe's book *Strong Medicine* which exposes the "inescapable" (but hardly surprising, for communists) fact that "inequalities in health between the classes have remained in spite of the NHS." Iliffe argues that the "primary objective of the NHS should be the progressive reduction in class inequalities in health", a perspective which will dovetail neatly with the forthcoming Euro version of the *British Road to Socialism*, which will no doubt dream of meeting all the liberal aspirations of the Euros within capitalism. But Paul Timperley, overawed by Iliffe's specialist expertise, keeps to himself any knowledge of Marxism which he may have.

The *Reading Communist Review* has no position on the burning issues of the day, such as Gorbachevite revisionism or the sellout of the Afghan revolution, the Irish war or, at home, the question of the organising the unemployed. More, its 'openness' is marred by its reluctance to publish any article which openly supports a particular platform, in fact it pretends (by silence) that tendencies such as *The Leninist*, *Straight Left/Communist*, the NCP and the CPB do not exist. It sets itself no practical tasks, and therefore has no reason for publication save to facilitate navel gazing and self justification.

Ian Farrell

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Open Letter to the Irish Freedom Movement

We call upon all genuine anti-imperialists to support the anti-imperialist contingent on August 12. In particular we call on supporters of the IFM to take up this struggle

DEAR COMRADES, there can be no doubt that solidarity work with the struggle for Irish self-determination, in quantity and quality, is woefully inadequate in Britain today. By anyone's reckoning the numbers involved are tiny and the 'official' solidarity movement has, virtually throughout the Irish war, ducked central questions and fudged key demands.

The demand for troops out now, whether or not formally adhered to, has been effectively replaced by 'sometime'. There is little attempt to link the fight against the British occupation of Ireland with the fight against the British state. As if abstract reason itself could break British workers from allegiance to 'their' state in its war against the Irish people, journals such as *Troops Out* present a bald catalogue of imperialist iniquities. Just so long as British workers side with British imperialism they will accept the dictates of imperialist rule, no matter how unpalatable.

It is just this type of failed political project which has propelled the 'official' solidarity movement into the orbit of Labourism, rather than the necessary head on confrontation with British chauvinism. This arduous and dangerous task has been dumped in favour of the easier life of courting Labourite dignitaries, who have come to dictate the political agenda of campaigning work.

This approach has now spawned the 'Time To Go' campaign. Characteristic of the forces involved - ranging from Clare Short to the SWP, from the Euros to the CPB and from the ex-Young Liberal leader Peter Hain to the entryist Trotskyites - all questions of principled anti-imperialism are absent from this opportunist lash up's charter.

According to *Socialist Action* supporter and 'Time To Go' coordinator Martin Collins, it "asks whether traditional slogans are an adequate response to the questions being asked" (*Labour and Ireland*). These "traditional slogans" are, of course, the demands for troops out now and self-determination for the Irish people as a whole - demands which, in truth, have never really been fought for by these soft left 'new realists'. Collins' article goes on to outline what a jolly affair the 'Time To Go' conference in June will be, as if one could build anti-imperialist solidarity as apolitically as if one was selling soap powder or T-shirts.

All this the Irish Freedom Movement and its parent body, the Revolutionary Communist Party, would no doubt agree with. But



When wasn't it time?

the conclusions that we draw from this would seem to be different from yours. *The Leninist's* response to 'Time To Go' was to initiate a number of meetings which led to the founding of Hands off Ireland!, a campaign to organise an anti-imperialist contingent on the 'Time To Go' march on August 12, to challenge its degenerate politics.

The IFM/RCP participated in the initial Hands off Ireland! meetings, but have subsequently not turned up, giving no formal reasons. Informally, individual IFM and RCP members tell us that to mobilise in any way for a 'Time To Go' event is to give it credibility.

Sadly, as we have stated before, such implicitly pro-imperialist politics already have credibility. The question is, how do anti-imperialists change this? Part of the answer is to turn the 'Time To Go' demonstration on its head, reaching out to the workers drawn onto the streets through the official labour movement channels of the organisers; channels which today still exert all too much influence on advanced workers. To fail to do this would be to grant the likes of Short and Hain the monopoly over such people's hearts and minds.

Of course, we have seen 'Time To Go' before. Ten years ago a similar march organised by the Young Liberals, Labour and revolutionary leftists and others mobilised a demonstration of 10,000 on a "bring our boys back home" type platform. Yet the RCP's precursor, the RCT, then intervened by 'picketing' the march (see *the next step*, December 1979). Now it seems to want a total boycott.

How does this serve the development of a mass anti-imperialist movement? It doesn't. We must develop a direct, visible challenge to 'Time To Go' and to the official labour movement before those it mobilises.

It says it expects between ten and twenty thousand. This, friends of the IFM, is one hell of a lot of people to be mobilised on Ireland today, whatever the opportunist slogans they march under. Anti-imperialists must find how to reach them and break their illusions in the Shorts and Hains. If merely saying 'no' when opportunists say 'yes' sufficed, then the anti-imperialist struggle would be a most simple business.

We do not mutter 'front' and seek cover when approached by the IFM, like many others on the British left. Indeed, we have been glad to work with you in building your anti-internment demonstrations and have spoken on your platforms.

Would that this were reciprocated on such an important issue. But we are not blind to the political problems that the RCP has. It condemns the 'official' solidarity movement for failing to explicitly raise the demand for troops out now, today, as it has done in the past; for example, its correct criticism of the 'Troops Out Movement' in 1980: "From its earliest days, TOM has mobilised around slogans such as 'free speech on Ireland', 'end British involvement', 'end the war', 'time to go' and 'Britain must withdraw' rather than anti-imperialist slogans." (*the next step*, June-July 1980).

Yet last year, one of the IFM's central slogans was: "Time to end

the Irish war". Now, once more, you clocked on that it was always 'time to end the Irish war' and have rightly attacked 'Time To Go' for saying otherwise.

Well and good. But you seem reluctant to take this any further. As far as the IFM is concerned it is business as usual. 'Time To Go' may as well not exist. IFM trade union resolutions have a list of Irish marches and events throughout the year, with no reference to the August 12 march. Why?

Again, we believe this error to be rooted in the unstable political standpoint of the RCP. In the 1980-81 period it had an orientation to the official labour movement with regard to Irish work, organising a labour movement conference on the question and a march to the TUC congress. But in under two years it seems that our friends decided that they were lobbying a stiff, as an editorial declared "RIP the official labour movement" (*the next step*, December 1982). This nonsensical and voluntaristic hyperbole has coloured the outlook of the RCP/IFM from then on in.

Although with such a perspective the IFM can organise relatively successful and militant demonstrations like its annual August anti-internment march, it places you in a position where you can only indirectly challenge the Labourite stance of the left and of the 'official' solidarity movement. This makes an anti-capitalist perspective for these types all the more easy to dismiss.

This is no great practical departure for the RCP. Remember 'Action Against Apartheid'? Well, you could be forgiven if it has escaped your memory. From a position of levelling some correct criticisms at the leadership of the AAM the RCP established its own front organisation, the aforementioned AAA, thus hermetically sealing its people off from the young radicals flooding into the AAM during the mid-eighties, inspired by the rising revolutionary wave in South Africa.

That sectarianism now finds expression in work on Ireland with a boycott of the 'Time To Go' march, a boycott of Hands off Ireland! This is a tragic mistake.

The boycott tactic, as Lenin made clear, is one of extremes, to be used sparingly. He made this point allegorically in an article in 1922: "Imagine that a communist has to enter premises in which agents of the bourgeoisie are carrying on their propaganda at a fairly large meeting of workers. Imagine also that the bourgeoisie demands from us a high price for admission to these premises. If the price has not been agreed beforehand we must bargain, of course, in order not to impose too heavy a burden upon our Party funds. If we pay too much for admission to these premises we shall undoubtedly commit an error. But it is better to pay a high price - at all events until we have learned to bargain properly - than to reject an opportunity of speaking to workers who hitherto have been

the exclusive 'possession', so to speak, of the reformists, ie, of the most loyal friends of the bourgeoisie." (CW, Vol 33, p330).

Will there not be workers on this demonstration who we would like to address, workers who will otherwise remain 'the exclusive possession' of the opportunists of 'Time To Go'? But what 'price' is demanded from us to address them through the Hands off Ireland! contingent? Don't start digging in your pockets, all it will cost is dropping sectarianism, there is no other charge for admission.

The attitude of the RCP and IFM is even more bizarre when one considers that they mobilise contingents every year on the Bloody Sunday demonstrations. What are the politics of the organisers of these demonstrations? Like 'Time To Go' they do not raise the demand for troops out now, substituting the nebulous phrase of 'withdrawal'. Like 'Time To Go' this is not open to discussion; participants on the day are presented with a fait accompli, since potential 'dissidents', such as ourselves and the IFM, find themselves bureaucratically excluded from planning meetings. But *The Leninist* and the RCP/IFM rightly mobilise nonetheless.

In what way is it, in principle, different from 'Time To Go'? Surely the difference is that the latter will certainly be bigger, mobilising forces which the amateurish organisers of the Bloody Sunday demonstration cannot. One would think that this is a powerful argument to build a powerful and principled challenge on that demonstration. That, it seems, is not how the minds who lead the IFM work.

Genuine anti-imperialists can ill afford to let the opportunists of 'Time To Go' off the hook so easily. Social democracy and Labourism may be, as Rosa Luxemburg said, a stinking corpse but far from it 'resting in peace', as the RCP likes to tell itself, the working class is still held by the dead hand of Labourism.

Hands off Ireland! presents a way in which this grip can be weakened with many workers on the question of Irish liberation. We call upon all genuine anti-imperialists to support the anti-imperialist contingent on August 12. In particular we call on supporters of the IFM to take up this struggle. The very least that one could expect from you is an open explanation for your boycottist position on this action.

Come clean, IFM: either support Hands off Ireland! or explain your reasons for not doing so, and let us debate these questions through. Solidarity with the Irish revolution and the forging of an anti-imperialist movement within the British working class demands an unequivocal approach to principle and the ability to root these principles within the working class. As it stands, the IFM is unstable on the former and completely lost on the latter. But, comrades, there is still time...

Alan Merrik

A critique of *Facing up to the future* and the *British Road to Socialism*

Which road?

Part 1

THE COMMUNIST movement in Britain is in profound crisis. Only the most bone headed would deny it. 'Official communism' is disintegrating. Membership has plummeted, opportunist splits and factions abound, and demoralisation rules. Indeed, so profound has the crisis become that our Party founded in July 1920 exists now only in name. Those who call themselves the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain do so illegitimately. They have taken the road of open class collaborationism and turned what was once a weapon in the class war into a think tank for the bourgeois left.

Since *The Leninist* was first published in November 1981 our central aim has been to reforge our CPGB through conducting an open ideological struggle and reorganising it around a communist programme. With this task in mind it is more than opportune that the Euros — given their anti-communism we will not call them 'Eurocommunists' but as they are now fully committed to the European Community the name Euros remains apt — have systematised their new realist ideology in *Facing up to the future*. Published in September 1988, this document — which has been widely praised by the bourgeois establishment — is designed to facilitate discussion within the Euro camp and lay the basis for a new edition of their programme, the *British Road to Socialism*.

As is less well known it is not only the Euro Executive Committee of the CPGB but also the 're-established' Communist Party of Britain split which is preparing a new version of the *BRS* (it was actually founded on the basis of defending it).

They need to. Unlike a genuine communist programme, which charts the course forward to revolution and only needs to be rewritten after this task has been successfully carried out, the *BRS* has had to be rewritten roughly every ten years. Against the test of life it has been proved useless, even for the reformist purposes for which the 'official communists' wanted to use it.

For example, the 1968 edition placed no conditions on its call for all British troops to withdraw from the Six Counties of Northern Ireland. Yet, when the revolutionary situation erupted the following year and put that demand firmly at the top of the political agenda, the opportunist leadership of the CPGB ignored its own programmatic position on Ireland in favour of pleas for British imperialism to enact a whole gamut of 'progressive' legislation before withdrawal could be considered.

The same fate befell the standing version of the *BRS* which was published in 1978. The election the very next year left this document and its reformist pipe dreams high and dry. It claimed that Britain would arrive at communism through the Labour government being shifted further and further to the left. Its authors appear not to have thought of the possibility that a Tory government could be

elected!

We know perfectly well that both wings of revisionism will produce nothing useful for the proletariat in its struggle for communism. They will remain committed to reformism. They are certainly incapable of learning from the great struggles of the last ten years, let alone drawing programmatic conclusions from them; in *Facing up to the future* the miners' Great Strike is only mentioned in passing and the heroic liberation war in Ireland is totally and disgracefully ignored.

Nevertheless, the fact that the main opportunist groupings in the 'official communist' movement are busily debating the principles underlying their *BRS* provides us with the ideal opportunity to expose their bankruptcy as well as giving a broad outline of the Marxist-Leninist approach to making revolution in Britain. So as well as showing why genuine communists must reject the *BRS* lock, stock and barrel we will present some of our ideas about what should be the approach of communists in Britain to their programme.

What we intend to do over the coming months is to present a series of supplements which will comprehensively deal with the *BRS*. This will take the form of firstly criticising *Facing up to the future*, then turning our attention to the existing (1978) edition of the *BRS* and, as they appear, the Euro and the CPB drafts followed by the final Euro and CPB versions as approved by the congresses of these organisations in November.

As readers will have gathered, work around the *BRS* will occupy our attention throughout 1989 and into 1990. At the end of this — funds allowing — we will edit the results into a pamphlet.

1. Why bother with 'Facing up to the future'?

As has been said, *Facing up to the future* was issued by the Euro Executive Committee of the CPGB as a discussion document designed to lay the basis for the launch of a new draft of the *British Road to Socialism*, which will be amended and finalised at their congress in November.

In effect *Facing up to the future* is a Euro manifesto. It goes beyond revisionism. This is a document which marks their break from any pretence of orthodox communist politics. While there is no real attempt to square Marxism-Leninism with the now organic unity of the Euros with bourgeois democracy and petty bourgeois radicalism, the authors of *Facing up to the future* do their utmost to construct an alternative which they claim is post-Marxist.

Yet the Euros are still haunted by Marxism-Leninism. So although Marxism, Leninism, communism, social revolution do not get mentioned, and the miners' Great Strike — the

highest example of the class struggle since 1926 — only passing, the authors of *Facing up to the future* attempt to exorcise certain fundamental doctrines of Marxism-Leninism by in effect turning them on their heads using quasi-materialistic explanations.

The result of this is monstrous. Under the banner of the Communist Party we are presented with a mish mash of all the current liberalistic fads and fancies combined with good old fashioned class collaborationism.

The bourgeois establishment was pleased, to say the least. It was a god-send with its project of fostering demoralisation and so-called 'new realism' in the labour movement. No wonder *The Guardian* called it "so radical as to take the breath away", *The Independent* claimed it was "one of the most fundamental rethinks of British Marxism ever undertaken". *The Sunday Times* recommended that "every Labour conference delegate ought to read it" and, not to be left out, the *New Statesman and Society* seriously maintained that it was "one of the most stimulating, fertile arguments about Britain's future to have come from the left in years".

For genuine communists such active support from the bourgeoisie — and make no mistake, that is what it is — would be enough to damn *Facing up to the future* into oblivion. But not the Euros. Like the fawning flunkies they are they actually used these very quotes in a *Marxism Today* ad in an effort to try and persuade people to join their ranks! These Judases are actually proud of their 30 pieces of silver!

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that many militant workers will dismiss *Facing up to the future* out of hand. Such an attitude is very natural: but that does not prevent it from being very mistaken.

Facing up to the future represents the latest phase in a sustained campaign by a loose grouping of academics championed by *Marxism Today* — consisting of the likes of Ernesto Laclau, Gavin Kitching, Gareth Stedman Jones, Stuart Hall and Chantal Mouffe — to destroy Marxism from within by promoting what they call 'post-Marxism'. In reality this is nothing other than a form of pre-Marxism, replacing as it does the class struggle as the locomotive of historical progress with the 'politics of discourse'.

This fifth column philosophical idealism of the Euros is of course diametrically opposed to materialism. If we peel away the academic doublespeak in which the authors of *Facing up to the future* package everything, we can see that their 'materialism' is only there to excuse the underlying argument that ideas are primary and the material world is somehow secondary (a view which ultimately leads to religion).

Of course our concern is not to rescue the Euros. They can go hang (on the cross if they so wish). No, the fact of the matter is that, using their quack materialist philosophy, the Euros are able to present new realism in a far

more clever-clever form than the Labourites around Kinnock have been able to do with their lumbering policy reviews.

In other words what we have with *Facing up to the future* is the politics of class collaboration in their most sophisticated, pernicious ... and, simply because it has been published by the Executive Committee of the CPGB, radical guise. Striking a blow against *Facing up to the future* is to strike a blow against Thatcherism, Euro 'new realism' and the anti-Marxism of academic 'Marxism'.

As we have already said, *Facing up to the future* is a sort of Euro manifesto. It is certainly an attempt to provide a condensed, rounded and 'materialist' presentation of their world view circa 1988. Obviously to counter every false argument, half-truth and downright nonsense would be a waste of time. Instead we will pick out what we consider the central ideas that underpin *Facing up to the future*. We will begin with what *Facing up to the future* calls 'Fordism' and 'post-Fordism', its main theoretical 'innovation'.

2. After Henry: 'Fordism' and 'post-Fordism'

Because the Euros are a trend in transition, because they have not arrived at religion, because they want to lay claim to at least the intellectual prestige of Marxism-Leninism it is not surprising that they have sought and found a quack 'materialistic' excuse to justify what is ultimately idealism and anti-materialism. This is 'Fordism' and 'post-Fordism'; a theory originally developed by the French economist, Michel Aglietta, who was at least partially inspired by the notes Gramsci made while in prison on 'Americanism and Fordism'.

Let us give a brief outline of the Euros' version of this theory. In the hands of the authors of *Facing up to the future* 'Fordism' has become far more sweeping and all-embracing than anything Aglietta suggested. Their 'Fordist order' "took its form", ie it was determined, on the basis of the assembly line techniques first pioneered by Henry Ford in 1913 (in spite of which the authors state that 'Fordism' was established after World War II). Anyway, muddle aside, for them the core of 'Fordism' was "large factories" which employed "armies of mainly semi-skilled workers". These workers "pumped out standardised products" consumed them and developed corresponding ideas and life styles.

Society as a whole was shaped by and reflected mass production, mass consumption and the predictable nature of competition. Full employment, the post war consensus, the "social democratic state" and, say some writers in *Marxism Today*, the mass party and cultural life from Diaghilev to American football and from modern architecture to mass fashions, flowed from the 'Fordist' methods of production.

Facing up to the future claims that the decay of 'Fordism' produced a crisis in the 1970s which put an end to the "social democratic project". Where the economic managerialism, paternalism and social conservatism of the "old order" produced a sense of drift and rudderlessness in society and state, Thatcherism was able to provide a solution, albeit a "populist" and "authoritarian" one.

Before we turn to criticise *Facing up to the future's* notion of 'Fordism' it is necessary to outline what it calls the new 'post-Fordist' order.

For the Euros we are entering a new phase of capitalist development. Although things are still in the process of transition, recent history has to be divided into an 'old order' and a 'new order' like BC and AD. The 'old Fordist order' was dominated by mass production and the USA. The 'new post-Fordist order' will be dominated by 'plurality', consumer choice and the economies of the Western Pacific — Japan and South Korea.

Facing up to the future says that the power of the nation state is in "decline" with the rise of the world financial markets and global companies. In the name of this 'internationalism' it advocates that the 'left' in Britain embrace the European Community.

On the basis of information technology, computers, robots, fax machines and flexible and integrated production the workforce and society, maintains *Facing up to the future*, is being reorganised. More, production "is losing its old dominance" and retailing and marketing have become the "commanding heights of the economy". For the Euros the 'post-Fordist era' will see the creation of a "core" of highly skilled workers — who are apparently both exploited and exploiters — and a periphery consisting of those "left behind" by the new technologies. This and the segmentation of consumers erodes, if not ends, the importance of class divisions in society. Hence exploitation at work and the class interests of the workers "cannot straightforwardly", argues *Facing up to the future*, "provide the collective interest for modern socialism."

Having outlined what *Facing up to the future* has to say we shall now present our main disagreements.

3. A 'Fordist' order?

Readers will already have come to the conclusion that there is nothing new under the sun. *Facing up to the future* is only the latest in a long line to say goodbye to the working class and hello to class collaborationism. In the 1890s there was Bernsteinism, during the 1930s Mondism arose, in the 1950s theories of the embourgeoisified working class were the vogue, in the 1960s capitalism, we were told, had given way to post-capitalism.

The main theoretical prop for *Facing up to the future* is 'Fordism' and 'post-Fordism'. This theory is as eclectic an amalgam of the trendy anti-Marxist ideas of the moment as its predecessors and will no doubt go the same way. *Facing up to the future* has a basic problem. It wants to have things both ways. It wants to appear materialistic and objective, and at the same time it wants to elevate the subjective and embrace idealism.

Facing up to the future therefore has to be based on the most sweeping generalisations. It puts up and duly knocks down Aunt Sallies in order to 'prove' its case and comes to conclusions which are by no means justified either on the basis of formal logic or capitalism's historic course. This is easily exposed.

The basic premise of a change from a 'Fordist' to a 'post-Fordist' order is the claim in *Facing up to the future* that mass production, and with it the working class, is on the decline. Of course, the working class is being restructured. This, as we all know, has been a constant feature of working class life since its inception; its shape, size, composition are determined by the changing needs of capital. For *Facing up to the future*, the fact that women make up an increasing proportion of the workforce comes as a revelation. Yet, at the dawn of industrial capitalism, in Britain's dark satanic mills, women (and children) made up the majority of the workers, as they do in the present day on the electronic assembly lines of the Pacific rim.

We will deal fully with the size of the working class in section 5. First let us tackle the question of assembly lines. As we have seen, *Facing up to the future* equates assembly lines with what it calls 'Fordism'. Yet assembly line techniques obviously predated the 1950s and

60s and, in spite of what its authors claim, they are not being marginalised but developed.

There can be no doubt that assembly line production of cars became the norm in the 1920s. But as soon as this was achieved the absolutely standardised product as epitomised by Ford's Model T — which only came in black — made way for Chevrolets, Buicks, Olds and Pontiacs, which not only came in different colours but different styles each directed at particular segments of the market: ie families, the young etc. (This is something *Facing up to the future* says is a defining characteristic of the late 1980s, what it calls 'post-Fordism'.)

If we place the car industry of the 1920s in the context of the general tendency of capitalism to replace living labour with dead labour, to mechanise production, the real significance of Henry Ford becomes clear. He did not invent mass production or the assembly line, let alone create a new order. What he did do was to bring in what was then relatively huge amounts of fixed capital to the infant car industry. This made possible the assembly line division of labour in that industry which resulted in a huge increase in labour productivity and the mass of profits. His competitors either had to adopt the same methods or go under.

Are the developments we see in the 1980s going against this trend of replacing people with machines? No, the tendency to replace people by machines continues. Present day talk is not only of the automated mine and factory but the automated office. Nor should the use of sophisticated marketing methods and advertising hype lead us to lose sight of the fact that the commodities produced today are in general increasingly standardised. Luxuries like 'designer labels' (of which *Facing up to the future* makes so much) included, the dominant trend is more and more towards the integration of the world market based on world commodities. This applies to the production of the means of consumption and the means of production.

Nissan does not produce a specific model just for the British market but a world car, neither does IBM or Deutch Gramophone. The same applies to those who produce world commodities as diverse as carbon fibre, VHS video tape, anti-AIDS medicines, 501 jeans, AK47s, James Bond films and Coca-Cola.

And without fetishising assembly line production it must be said that all the above commodities are produced using this technique, indeed generally on a far larger scale and in a far more automated form than Henry Ford developed for the Model T. The production teams employed by firms like Volvo, on which *Facing up to the future* places so much emphasis, have long been used in the manufacture of ships and aircraft. Apart from being a method used to increase the exploitation of labour it does not represent a qualitative break from former techniques, only a reorganisation and refinement.

The idea that current developments in capitalism are leading away from mass production and mass markets is banal. We only need look at what *Facing up to the future* says are the dynamic forces behind the Euros 'post-Fordist' era, Japan and Korea to see this.

Their vast factories churn out masses of standardised products that have come to dominate one sector of the world economy after another. The world is not about to be swamped by designer labels or William Morris type arts and crafts ... but it is being swamped by standardised and mass produced Korean manufactured ships, TVs and computers and Japanese cars, hi-fis and silicon chips.

So we would say that there is neither 'Fordism' nor 'post-Fordism'. Where capitalism was in the 1920s, the 1950s and where it will be in the 1990s represents a quantitative development of the monopoly capitalism which came to dominance in the 1870s to 1880s. There has been no fundamental qualitative break that necessitates us designating the decade we are living in now as somehow being the beginning of a completely different 'order' or 'era' compared to the last hundred or so years.

The same goes for marketing. Even before capitalism was dominated by monopolies individual capitalists targeted consumers with "distinct tastes and lifestyles". This did not contradict mass consumption, in fact it was a means of facilitating it. Monopolies today have developed the marketing techniques pioneered in the late 19th century and expanded spending on advertising to truly obscene proportions. This growth of unpro-

ductive capital hardly creates 'new times', it merely carries on the decadent features of capitalism which appeared towards the end of the last century and takes them to even more rotten levels.

4. Production and consumption

The main device *Facing up to the future* uses to elevate the subjective and embrace idealism is in its treatment of the importance of production in society.

There is of course a contradiction between what *Facing up to the future* says about the 'Fordist' and 'post-Fordist' order being determined by production, namely the supposed transition from assembly lines to flexible production based on robots and computers, and the claim that under 'post-Fordism' production has been replaced by consumption as the "commanding heights of the economy".

We will leave this problem to the Euros. Suffice to say *Facing up to the future's* main argument remains — under 'post-Fordism' production and the class struggle is no longer the key thing in social evolution and has been replaced by such issues as the environment and enjoying an agreeable petty bourgeois life style through individualism and consumption.

This is a central question. What *Facing up to the future* is in fact suggesting is that we have just made an historical leap equivalent to going from ape to man (except, maybe, this time backwards?). We now have *homo consumptionist*, the unrestrained individual consumer, as opposed to *homo sapiens*, the being determined by labour and the productive forces of society (ie tools in the broadest sense of the word).

For Marxists the basis of mankind's social life is not consumption but the labour people expend on the production of the necessities of life — food, clothing, housing etc. using tools. Within this lies the secret of what makes mankind different from other animals. Mankind's language, culture, its consciousness, its social life is in the last analysis made possible by the fact that it is a productive animal which uses tools with which it adapts nature to itself. This is not the case with other animals which obviously consume but do not use tools and instead slowly and passively adapt to nature.

That *Facing up to the future* gets itself in such a logical tangle is a direct consequence of its underlying philosophical idealism. Nonetheless it would do us well to restate and concretely show why production — indeed the production of the means of production — remains at the root of social development and consciousness.

To the authors of *Facing up to the future* this does not appear to be the case. For them, like Thatcher, the 'consumer is king'. Marxists on the other hand understand that developments in the productive forces create their own consumers, it is not the other way round.

We can illustrate this neatly using a couple of the examples of 'post-Fordism' cited in *Facing up to the future*. It rightly places a lot of emphasis on the impact computers have had and will have on society. It also says that the development of satellite TV will result in 'lifestyles' becoming more 'diverse' because we will have a multiplicity of channels (all putting out stuff just as insipid as we get everyday from the BBC and ITV — JC).

Both these examples prove our point. The computer was not developed because of consumer demand. Advances in the computer created the basis for mass consumer demand. Likewise with satellites. They were first developed for military purposes, since then miniaturisation and the availability and cheapening of launches have created the possibility for Murdoch types to create consumer demand for the array of channels made possible by satellite broadcasting.

At the most fundamental level it is clear that under capitalism the transition from using first water power, then steam power, then electrical generators and finally nuclear power — ie advances in the production of the most basic means of production — have each in their turn had a profound impact on creating new possibilities of what can be produced, consumed and thought.

Without steam power industrial capitalism could never have taken off. Without it there would have been no successful development of the mining industry (pumping out water), therefore no leap in the iron and steel industry, no Lancashire cotton industry, no steam

ships, no railways, no Manchester, no Glasgow, no mass markets for mass produced consumer goods, no Marxism, no escapist Pre-Raphaelites, no drown your sorrows gin palaces.

The development of electrical generation had a similarly profound impact in making possible completely new industries from aluminium smelting to telegraphs and telephones. Without electrical generation there could have been no demand for vacuum cleaners, radios or TVs, no North London and Midlands industrial explosion, no Charlie Chaplin, no surrealist art, no computer games. In the same way the development of nuclear fusion (as is well known Pons and Fleischmann have just claimed a breakthrough), space stations, 'warm' superconductivity and the elusive fifth generation computer in the period ahead will create their own demand and have a knock on effect with the creation of a host of new industries and goods which we cannot predict and for which there certainly is at present no consumer demand.

The claim made in *Facing up to the future* that the marketing decisions of Marks and Spencer are more important than developments within the field of production and, logically, in the production of the means of production, is clearly wrong. It only contains a truth in the sense that it points to the power of monopolies — whether in production or retail. They can subordinate to themselves vertically and horizontally a whole swathe of scattered smallish producers and outlets. This in turn affects society as a whole. But *Facing up to the future* is not concerned with any of this.

Strange, given that they are in an organisation which is meant to be "guided" by Marxism-Leninism, its authors are determined to come up with the most silly arguments in order to restore idealism. Because of this they suggest that production has lost its former importance, ignoring the process of monopolisation and claim instead that the biggest barrier to social advance is the conservatism of the working class.

This is not the case. The fact of the matter is that the new technologies capitalism is creating find their biggest barrier in the existence of capitalism itself. It acts as a fetter on the development of the productive forces and because of its inherent limitations finds that it cannot control the very forces it has created.

The emergence of previous forms of class society — ancient and feudal — allowed the productive forces to leap forward once, after which they could not prevent them from stagnating. Capitalism, because it is based on the insatiable thirst for profit, must, Sisyphus-like, constantly revolutionise production. Yet, in spite of being a dynamic system, capitalism has become reactionary because it now represents a relative fetter on the development of the productive forces.

Capitalism has a historical tendency to create a relative pauperisation of the population — the masses get poorer relative to the wealth of the few. This leads to a situation where the ever increasing quantity of commodities produced, in the effort to increase the mass of profits, cannot find a market crudely, workers' wages are not enough to buy what is in the shops. More, because of the drive to replace living labour with machines and the resulting tendency for the rate of profit to decline, capital itself is overaccumulated.

Capitalism's aim and limit is profit. The endemic drift towards overproduction under capitalism results in the development of capitalism through a series of crises, each one more devastating. Surplus capital has to be destroyed before a new round of accumulation can begin. But where under competitive/industrial capitalism surplus capital was destroyed simply through the economic mechanism of a slump, imperialism has now added war to this cycle.

This means that capitalism's basic contradiction between the productive forces and the productive relations (dismissed by *Facing up to the future*) has come to represent a danger to both the potential of the productive forces to advance and now, with nuclear weaponry, humanity itself. None of this, war, crisis, overaccumulation, is to be found in *Facing up to the future*.

The technical developments *Facing up to the future* makes so much of can only be seen in the context of a definite mode of production — capitalism, which now holds back what is possible. The socialisation of labour — which through monopolisation is advancing

more rapidly than ever — demands an end to capitalism's boom/slump anarchy of production and the founding of a real new order, socialism.

Certainly unless socialism triumphs capitalism will plunge the world economy into a new general crisis — far more devastating than the 1914-48 general crisis. The existence of capitalism no longer stands in harmony with the productive forces. The class relations and the corresponding state and laws which protect them have become a barrier which has to be removed by the working class through revolution if mankind is to advance or for that matter survive.

So while paying due attention to the huge technological strides we are witnessing it is essential to recognise that although they lay the material basis for sweeping social changes, this will be ensured not in the coming together of chummy little circles around *Marxism Today* but in the workplaces, on the streets and in the determination of the working class to make revolution.

5. What about the workers?

Facing up to the future is equally as wrong when it comes to the working class as it is about mass production. Far from disappearing or declining, as it implies, if we take a world view — and capitalism can only be understood as a world system — it is clear that the working class is growing at a tremendous rate.

Using the narrowest definition of the proletariat — industrial workers — its numbers are increasing by about 8% per annum. If we take the 36 leading industrial countries, it actually grew from 173 to 183 million between the years 1977 and 1982 (a period of recession which saw millions sacked). It is also clear that the working class is no longer concentrated in Western Europe and North America. Today the USSR and China have more industrial workers than the US, Federal Germany and Britain. And huge concentrations of industrial workers are now to be found in countries like India, Brazil, Mexico and Pakistan — ahead of Italy, Spain and Canada (source: *UN Industrial Statistical Yearbook* 1983).

In short, there are more workers in the world today than at any other time in history. And the figures would be far more dramatic if we (correctly) used a broader definition of the working class, ie including those who work in transport, mining, services etc.

If we did we would see that even in Britain — historically the most proletarianised of nations — the working class is growing. The crash in industrial production in the late 1970s and early 1980s wiped out some two million jobs in this sector. Yet with the growth and proletarianisation of other sections of the workforce — eg nurses, teachers and office workers — the working class has certainly increased in size and makes up some 70% of the population.

The rise of non-productive areas of the economy that *Facing up to the future* interprets as heralding the dawn of a new era is in fact a direct result of the parasitic nature of Britain's imperialist economy (revealingly *Facing up to the future* only refers to imperialism once, and then in the past tense).

No doubt for these Eurocommunists the essence of imperialism is colonialism. This is, of course, is not true. The essence of imperialism is monopoly capitalism and the export of capital. Imperialism did not end with the end of the great colonial empires, it simply took on a new, more appropriate, form. Under imperialism — capitalism's last, decadent, stage — growth is uneven, spasmodic and parasitic. While the speculators, advertising agencies, bankers and arms manufacturers amass huge fortunes this takes place within a sea of relative decline in industry. This is ABC for Marxist-Leninists.

But so mesmerised are the authors of *Facing up to the future* by Thatcher's talk of the enterprise culture and Gorbachev's promise of world peace and cooperation that they actually claim that decadent capitalism is giving birth to a brave new world of individualism and affluence.

As we have seen, *Facing up to the future* tries to get rid of the working class through the claim that it is on the decline. We have also seen that, by maintaining that production has given way to consumption, the importance of class — which is after all a relationship to production — can be downplayed in favour of issues like feminism, ecology and education

reform. But there are yet other strings to the Eurocommunists' attack on the working class. Try, try and try again is their motto.

We will use this extensive quote from *Facing up to the future* in order to show the depths of intellectual dishonesty to which its authors will descend in their effort to deny the importance of the working class:

"Class in modern capitalism is not the product of a single polarisation between a ruling class, which owns the means of production, and a working class of wage labourers. Class is produced by the intersection of different kinds of exploitation, which produce different class positions within the workforce.

"The working class is that class which has no productive assets to counter capitalist exploitation at work. But the development of post-war capitalism has produced a great swathe of wage earners and the self employed, who control some kind of productive asset — skills, knowledge, organisational power over production. They are both exploited and exploiters. An increasing number of people in modern capitalist society occupy these 'contradictory class locations'. And this complexity has increased with the new divisions created by the transition to the new order.

"The importance of these contradictions within the workforce means that class cannot straightforwardly provide the collective interests for modern socialism.

"Exploitation through work is not the only determinant of how power and resources are distributed. Other forms of oppression and domination systematically structure inequalities of power Socialism will not succeed on the basis of an appeal to a single 'pure' class identity. It will need to construct an alliance of social forces, made up of diverse class and social interests. This does not mean that 'class struggle' should be downgraded. It means that class politics will have to take new forms: more than ever it will be about building alliances. But as importantly the social arena will be a key area of contestation. Socialist strategy must connect economic struggles with moral, sexual and ethnic struggles. This can no longer be a secondary agenda after the 'class' struggle. It must be alongside it, centre stage.

".... Increasingly coalitions will most easily be constructed around issues which affect the quality of social life — health, education, ecology — rather than around the workplace." (Our emphasis)

There is an awful lot of nonsense here, deliberately vague nonsense too. The authors of *Facing up to the future* consistently refuse to openly state their real positions, relying instead on evasive formulations which can be taken this way or that way. So we must obviously try and differentiate between what is said and what is meant.

The life of society is extremely complex. This is not a new discovery and has nothing to do with the emergence of some 'new order'. Yes, within class society there are and always have been conflicts between the sexes, different ethnic and religious groups and alliances between different sections of different classes over issues like democracy, education, health etc.

The great stride forward that Marxism represented was providing a means to put the blurred mass of ideas, movements and campaigns into focus. It did this with the theory of the class struggle. Using this theory it became possible to reveal to the working class what its objective interests were and expose the hidden motives of those who claimed to speak for god, country or universal good. What was crucial was socio/economic interest.

As we have shown, in spite of what *Facing up to the future* says, the fundamental determinant of social life is material production. In other words classes are determined and should be defined not by 'power', 'polarisation' or 'inequalities' nor by "the intersection of different kinds of exploitation" but by their socio/economic relation (in most cases fixed and formulated by law) to the means of production which has a reality not only in the workplace, as *Facing up to the future* suggests, but in society as a whole. Relationship to the means of production is what leads to different class interests, power or the lack of it, social polarisation and exploitation.

Facing up to the future talks vaguely about "different sorts of exploitation". What we have here is a deliberate attempt to equate oppression based on colour, sex etc with exploitation ie the extraction of surplus value. In other words *Facing up to the future* has no wish to admit what exploitation actually is and

how it is the product of one class owning the means of production while another labours. Not an unimportant question. After all, the contradiction between capital and labour lies at the very root of all social life of capitalist society.

This does not mean that we are saying all the differences and contradictions in society apart from class should be considered irrelevant. They most certainly are not. But what we are trying to establish is that grasping the central importance of class is essential if we are to understand how and why society evolves.

Workers may speak different languages, have different skin colour or be a man or a woman but yes, this is secondary and has nothing to do with the existence of "different class positions within the workforce", if by workforce is meant the working class. This class has every interest in fighting all forms of national, racial and sexual discrimination because the key to its liberation lies in uniting itself in the fight for communism. The same cannot be said for capital, which has every interest in fostering sectional divisions among the exploited and the oppressed.

Precisely the basic classes of capitalist society are the product of which "owns the means of production" and which has to sell its labour power for wages. This is what defines the working class, it has nothing to do with not being able to counter "capitalist exploitation at work".

Without the working class the capitalist mode of production could not exist; this cannot be said of secondary differences within the working class. The relationship between the two basic classes (labour and capital) is fundamental to the existence of the mode of production itself. But within this unity there exists an antagonistic contradiction simply because the basic classes of capitalism have diametrically opposed immediate and long term interests which must be positively resolved in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Of course, besides the two basic classes of capitalism there are other, non-basic classes; there never has been nor will there ever be a pure capitalist society with only workers and capitalists. As well as carry overs from feudalism there is within developed capitalism the middle class which stands in between the two basic classes.

But while this class makes up some 20% of the population it has no independent existence or politics. It acts as a servant for the bourgeoisie, but can, if the working class is strong and confident, be drawn in the opposite direction. Although this is not a small class it is definitely not true that an "increasing number of people" in modern capitalist society occupy such "contradictory class locations".

Sections of what was the middle class have become proletarianised. Certainly it is a general rule that the more capitalism develops the stronger becomes the working class — the vehicle of a new higher social order. Life, in the form of strikes by civil servants, teachers and nurses, brilliantly proves this.

What about the notion that "postwar capitalism" has produced workers who are both exploited and exploiters? This is perhaps the most desperate and dishonest attempt to dismiss the importance of class. To arrive at this conclusion *Facing up to the future* seems to have taken its cue from the Italian born academic Piero Sraffa and his followers. They maintain that the labour theory of value is wrong and has to be separated from the concept of exploitation. For them, like *Facing up to the future*, the possession of skills is a form of property allowing the skilled to 'exploit' the unskilled.

Where Marx revealed the inner workings of the capitalist system, the Euros are determined in *Facing up to the future* to produce a fog which obscures the fact that the exploitative relationship between labour and capital is the axis around which the whole of capitalist society revolves. There is a theoretical leap back into the dark ages.

Marx showed how the growth of money possessed by all the capitalists taken together did not and could not have its true source in the sphere of circulation, which involves only the exchange of equivalents — otherwise, through simply putting up prices, mutual losses and gains would cancel each other out — but in a special commodity whose consumption is at the same time an act of creation.

This special commodity, Marx explained, was human labour power. Surplus value is created through the special quality of the commodity labour power — the ability of workers

to produce enough in part of the working day to sustain themselves physically and culturally (necessary labour time which actually covers the value of wages) and then for the rest of the working day (surplus labour time) producing surplus value which is appropriated without payment by the capitalist. This exploitation is the source of capitalism's growing wealth, the origin of profit, interest and rent.

Let us now deal with this question of skills. It is true that different individuals and groups of workers can obtain higher wages because the skills they possess are in short supply. But this hardly adds up to exploitation, ie the expropriation of surplus value.

Skilled workers do not live by buying (as capitalists do with variable capital) the labour power of other workers. The position of individuals can, of course, change. Former workers can 'better' themselves and become petty bourgeois or full blown capitalists. But skilled workers are by definition workers. It is as simple as that. Like all other workers they possess nothing else other than their ability to labour (however skilled that labour may be).

To sustain themselves and their families they are forced to sell their ability to labour (the commodity labour power) to capitalists for wages for which they themselves pay during the part of the day in which they perform necessary labour — the capitalists appropriating their surplus value produced during the surplus labour time just as with other workers, ie they exploit them. In spite of their skills these workers live off their wages, not capital, they are wage slaves not exploiters.

Whatever *Facing up to the future* claims to the contrary it is abundantly clear that the Euros are out to downgrade the class struggle. In fact they want to dismiss it entirely. Revealingly they put the words class and class struggle in inverted commas and reduce it to the workplace. Doing this and having used one intellectually dishonest device after another to marginalise the working class the authors of *Facing up to the future* feel safe to declare that: "contradictions within the workforce means that class cannot straightforwardly provide the collective interests for modern socialism."

Straightfowardness aside it is exactly the "collective interests" of the working class that makes socialism a real possibility rather than a utopian dream. It is not a question of 'appealing' to 'pure' class identity but recognising the objective historic mission of the working class.

Marx and Engels, through their analysis of the economic structure of capitalism, came to the conclusion that this social system, like all previous ones, creates its own grave diggers. Where this role was in the past played by an exploiting minority, the slave owners, the feudal aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, the capitalist system places this task before the proletariat.

The founders of scientific communism did not base this conclusion on the fact that the working class along with the bourgeoisie is one of the two basic classes of capitalism. Or that the day to day interests of the working class propels it into struggle with the capitalist class.

What was crucial was that capitalism arrives at a point where it holds back and threatens the development of the productive forces. The workers' interests coincide with the forward march of history in the form of liberating the productive forces from the shackles of capitalist property relations. But the main thing Marx and Engels were able to show was the historic role of the working class as the builder of socialist society.

The working class does not own the means of production. Indeed, since private ownership of the means of production forms the basis for the exploitation of the working class by the capitalist, its abolition and its replacement by social ownership (socialism) is the key to its self liberation.

It is well suited to this task of self liberation. Not only is the working class constantly added to by the growth of capitalism but by the very nature of its conditions of life it is capable of the highest levels of organisation and discipline. As opposed to other classes, as opposed to cross class protest movements, the working class can be wielded, if under communist leadership, into a force which can really challenge the capitalist order.

It labours in workplaces, factories, mines, offices often containing hundreds, if not thousands and lives in large towns and cities. In their daily lives workers are trained to think and act collectively. Solidarity, mutual support and action become second nature. Every

day capitalist exploitation is met by working class organisation, resistance and strike action. All this gives the working class the raw potential to carry out its historic mission of abolishing capitalism and replacing it with communism.

The Marxist doctrine of the historic mission of the working class showed why the class struggle of the working class and the struggle for socialism (the first stage of communism) were inseparable. Where utopian communists in the past appealed for justice to princes or organised tightly knit circles of conspirators, where the Euros place their faith in influencing the bourgeois state through appealing to common sense, Marxists understand the revolutionary logic of working class interests and the power of working class organisation.

Of course, to turn raw potential to actuality, to become the ruling class, the working class must learn to champion the rights and interests of all classes and sections oppressed by capitalism and the capitalist state. The fight for socialism has nothing to do with 'pure' class interests but winning the working class to the *consciousness* of itself as a class for itself which, by liberating humanity, liberates itself. This is the role of the Communist Party.

The struggle of the working class is not therefore confined to the workplace as *Facing up to the future* suggests. It concerns every area, every aspect of social and political life, yes including 'moral, sexual and ethnic struggles'. Unless the working class embraces this it remains either a slave class unaware of its own slavery or a slave class which merely fights to improve its conditions, certainly not the instrument to end slavery. That is why genuine communists say that the working class must become the hegemon of all those engaged in struggle.

6. 'Fordism', social democracy and the state

The 'decay' of 'Fordism', ie the stagnation of the car industry in the 1970s, was not the natural coming to an end of a form of production, as *Facing up to the future* implies. It was the direct consequence of capitalism's cycle — the end of the long post World War II boom and the beginning of the drift towards a new general crisis.

Naturally this has had profound political consequences.

It was the drift towards general crisis, not the 'decay' of 'Fordism', which resulted in the politics of class consensus being eroded. It was the reason why the politics of class war came to the fore. Likewise it has been the drift towards general crisis that has been the cause of the end to full employment, not the transition to 'post-Fordism'.

But the muddle that is *Facing up to the future* is much deeper. Strangely, very strangely it equates 'Fordism' with full employment, class consensus and the 'social democratic state'. Frankly, this is stupid.

Assembly line production in the car industry became generalised from the 1920s. This decade and the one that followed were hardly ones of full employment or for that matter class consensus. Across the board in all the advanced capitalist countries as a percentage of the workforce unemployment was far higher then than even now.

And far from class consensus there was class war. Germany was gripped by a crisis which was only resolved with the coming of the Nazis. Civil war pitted class against class in Spain and China. Even in Britain — compared with other countries a conservative nation — we saw embryonic soviets formed in 1920, a general strike in 1926 and a communist led National Unemployed Workers Movement which had 100,000 members by the early 1930s. It was only World War II — which cost the lives of 50 million human beings — that allowed capitalism to begin a new cycle of accumulation on the basis of class consensus. As to the 'social democratic state' ... here we see the descent of *Facing up to the future* into imbecility.

The USA epitomised 'Fordism', say the its authors. Yet that country has never even produced a mass social democratic party, let alone a 'social democratic state'. Henry Ford himself was violently anti-union and had known fascist sympathies.

And what exactly do the Euros mean by a 'social democratic state'? This is not made clear. Is it a country where the state exercised control over large sections of the economy? The USA would not fit in here ... but Nazi

Germany would ... where this leaves the US epitomising 'Fordism' we will again have to leave to the Euros to sort out.

But back to the point in question. We certainly accept that the capitalist state can take a number of different political forms — fascism, monarchy, democracy etc. Nonetheless the essence of these states — any state for that matter — is an armed body of men which is used as an instrument of class rule. Hence all states are dictatorships. Knowing the Euros, this is not what they mean. For them ideas are the thing.

So could their 'social democratic state' be that country whose politics have been dominated by a social democratic party which safely administers the capitalist system? This would in our view certainly be legitimately called a 'social democratic state'. But if this is so then apart from a few exceptions like Sweden this would not apply to most Western European countries, least of all Britain, where we have seen social democratic parties in and out of office but hardly dominating the political system.

Unless the authors of *Facing up to the future* have decided to make Edward Heath, Richard Nixon and General de Gaulle 'social democrats', they have a problem ... and if they have, they most certainly have a problem.

Let us leave behind this mess. For the sake of the argument we will take for granted the contention in *Facing up to the future* that the 'decay' of 'Fordism' means that the 'social democratic project' has come to an end. We would say that even within the terms of reference set by *Facing up to the future* this is both wrong and Anglo-centric.

Certainly the Labour Party in Britain has, as we have explained on countless occasions, gone from being the alternative party of government and reverted to its role as a party of crisis. One of the results of this was the formation of the SDP.

This has not been the fate of all social democratic parties. There is no exact or direct correlation between politics and economics. After all, in Western Europe in the 1980s social democratic parties have been in office for more than one term in a number of countries, not least France, Spain, Greece and of course Sweden.

The Euros' attempt to explain the decline of the Labour Party through the world wide decay of 'Fordism' shows that they like to imagine that Britain is at the centre of the universe. It also shows that they have no understanding of capitalist economics and its relationship to politics.

But has the social democratic project ended? Of course not. For the social democratic parties in France, Spain, Greece and Sweden the 'project' of administering the capitalist system is a fact of life. Since capitalism's long boom has come to an end, and with it class consensus and full employment, this means imposing the politics of austerity against working class resistance.

Facing up to the future talks of a 'crisis of socialism'; if by that it means a crisis of Labourism then we agree. This does not, though, put an end to the 'social democratic project'. The Labour Party is still just as committed to the logic of running the capitalist system (this is the 'social democratic project') as it was during the hungry 1920s and 30s, the horrors of World War II, the 1950s and 60s long boom, and the pre-general crisis 1970s and 80s.

And ironically when we read *Facing up to the future* and its charity mongering proposals for a 'controlled market', giving workers shares in the top 200 companies and the creation of a 'social' stock exchange, it is clear that the Euros have themselves taken up the banner of social democracy. In spite of all its talk of modernism, it dreams of returning to the 1950s when there was, they believe, "a sense of social solidarity and common purpose". This is Labourism.

Like the Labourites they believe that the key to social progress lies in the bourgeois state. Unlike communists they have no wish to smash this instrument of bourgeois rule. They openly state that socialism has no direct relationship to working class interests, that it is essentially a non-class question and that if it is anything it is merely an extension of bourgeois democracy.

Like the Labourites they now praise the EC imperialist bloc. Likewise their pacifism has been blunted with a 'new realist' multilateralist caveat. In other words, like the Labourites they have attempted to come to terms with the Thatcher years by accepting the basic Thatcherite agenda.

The Alternative Economic Strategy, nationalisation, opposition to wage controls have gone, to be replaced by *Facing up to the future's* consumerism, 'socialist' individualism and its dream of opening up home ownership for 18 year olds. In other words, a petty bourgeois version of Thatcherism.

7. Thatcherism

Facing up to the future defines Thatcherism as a 'populist authoritarianism' which has captured the popular mood in the period where 'Fordism' is supposed to be decaying. What are the facts?

The Thatcher government certainly is more authoritarian than other post-World War II governments, the end of the long boom dictates confrontation in place of consensus. But this has taken place within the framework of bourgeois democracy. Therefore Thatcherism represents not a qualitative break with post-World War II Toryism but a quantitative development.

Nevertheless, due to the ineffective nature of reformist resistance, the Tories have successfully shackled the trade unions, made effective trade unionism illegal and through doing little to stop the rise in unemployment (except changing the methods of calculation) undermined the bargaining power which organised labour enjoyed during the 1960s and 70s.

Worse, the methods used to suppress the Irish have been brought home. The British people cannot listen to the voice of Sinn Féin, their right to silence has been eroded and the tactics perfected on the streets of Derry and Belfast were used with deadly effect against the rebel youth of the inner cities, striking printers and above all the heroic miners. All of this is true ... but as we have said Ireland does not even get a mention in *Facing up to the future*.

What of 'populism'? Thatcher obviously appeals to existing prejudices, but then so does Labourism and *Facing up to the future*. But as a party the Tories have not achieved anything remarkable in the way of popularity. The Tory vote is well below what they were getting in the 1950s and 60s. Their vote hovers around the 40% mark and every opinion poll shows that on issue after issue, the poll tax, water privatisation, the NHS, there exists a huge reservoir of opposition.

Nonetheless the fact of the matter is that the Tory Party is the bourgeoisie's preferred party of government. Nothing — not even the miners' Great Strike — has led this class to look for an alternative. And in the sense that the ruling ideas in bourgeois society are always the ideas of the bourgeoisie, Thatcherism has been the articulation of a drive to shift popular opinion across a whole range of different issues. Those who have no world view anchored in the scientific ideology of Marxism-Leninism have been pulled along in the Tories wake.

Thatcher has set the agenda both in society as a whole and within Labourism. The Labour Party has abandoned one old reformist shibboleth after another till it now has a Thatcherite ideology. The Euros have now got their own version of this with *Facing up to the future*.

8. Why 'Fordism'? Where are the Euros going?

This brings us to the question of where the Euros themselves are going. Obviously their case for a 'Fordist/post-Fordist' divide and the conclusions they draw are completely erroneous. But conjuring up 'Fordism' and then duly banishing it with 'post-Fordism' does serve a purpose. It does not help us to come to grips with developments in the real world but it does admirably suit them and their political project of securing a niche within the mainstream of bourgeois politics.

They have baggage to get rid of and they need an excuse for doing so ... this is what 'Fordism/post-Fordism' is all about. 'Fordism' becomes capitalism, or at least the imperialist capitalism analysed by Lenin etc. By claiming that 'Fordism' is now dead if not buried, the Euros can safely do the same for the theory that we are living in an epoch of moribund capitalism, war and socialist revolution.

More, as we have said, *Facing up to the future* promises us a bright new 'post-Fordist'

order for capitalism ... as long as the 'left' (which also apparently includes the SLD and SDP!) is able to break from the "political demarcation lines which it inherited from the old order."

A more honest way of putting this would be breaking from working class politics and embracing a petty bourgeois version of Thatcherism ... but then the Euros have never been known for their honesty.

In *Facing up to the future* the contradictions of capitalism, the tendency for the rate of profit to decline, the inevitability of general crisis, the danger of war are set aside under the guise of 'post-Fordism', to be replaced by a Euro vision of Thatcherism along with the promise of a capitalism "modernised", "democratic" and "prosperous". Heard it before? Yes, for all its claims to be new, this is in essence the line peddled by Labourite social democracy from its very inception.

Yet where Labourism has deep social roots in bourgeois society through the labour and trade union bureaucracy, the Euros are a trend in transition, which is moving at a pace of knots.

Labourism can move to the left, to the right, but its ideology remains basically stable. The same cannot be said of the Euros. When it emerged as a distinct trend within 'official communism' it claimed to be revolutionary, it targeted the disillusioned 'children of '68' and drew a not insignificant number into its ranks. Today it is peddling left Thatcherism. What it will be saying tomorrow cannot be said with any certainty. Nonetheless, if the Euros fully evolve, there are basically two forms it can end up taking.

The first is full social democracy. We have in front of us today the living obscenity of the Italian Communist Party as an example of a party that has made this transition. It is social democratic in everything except name. Its leaders never mention class, let alone the class struggle. It considers the EC and Nato a good thing and is determined to prove itself "worthy of a place in the mainstream of Western Europe's social democratic parties." (*Financial Times* March 17 1989)

The only obstacle that has prevented the PCI from joining the Socialist International (!) has been Italy's small established Socialist Party which is determined to maintain this franchise. No doubt if the temperature of the class war in Italy were to rise, if the working class in Italy took to the offensive, the bourgeoisie would call upon the PCI to take office in order — like the Labour Party in Britain in the 1920s — to act as a safety valve so as to save the bourgeois order.

This future is highly unlikely for our Euros. However much they might like to imagine themselves taking government positions, they do not have the social weight for this role. They are not the PCI, and the Labour Party left can always be brought in if needed.

This brings us to the other alternative. The rightist trajectory of the Euros is clear. Unless they end up as some sort of living fossil — which, given their ideological fluidity, is not likely but possible — the march to the right will continue. There are important lessons from history which show where this leads, which however shocking have to be admitted and faced.

The leaders of fascism have not only come from the right but also from the left. Mussolini was once the editor of the Italian Socialist Party's central organ *Avanti*, Pilsudski was the leader of the Polish Socialist Party, while Mosley served as a minister in Britain's second Labour government and took with him leading Labour leftists like AJ Cook (the Arthur Scargill of his day) into his proto fascist party.

It is vital to emphasise that we are not saying here that this is where the Euros will definitely end up. Nonetheless, given a profound economic or political crisis in capitalism, the shattering of Thatcherism and the failure of the working class to make revolution, fascism would undoubtedly grow and find recruits from those once on the reformist left.

The Euros, with their ideological flux, their commitment to capitalist modernisation and petty bourgeois hatred for the working class, could well be drawn in this direction. They already consider themselves an elite. They will bring socialism, not the working class masses. And their 'socialism' is of a bourgeois sort. It is not a transitional form of society, the first stage of communism, but a veneer for a strengthened, modernised capitalist state. This already has more in common with Mussolini than Lenin.

Jack Conrad